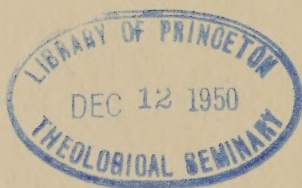




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Roper, William, 1496-1578.
The lyfe of Sir Thomas
Moore, knighte

ROPER'S "MORE"

BOOKS OF THE RENAISSANCE

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SOME POEMS OF SIR THOMAS WYATT

EDITED BY ALAN SWALLOW

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SIXTY POEMS OF SCÈVE

INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION & COMMENT

BY WALLACE FOWLIE

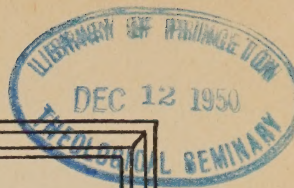
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ROPER'S LIFE OF MORE

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY JAMES MASON CLINE





THE LYFE OF
SIR THOMAS MOORE, KNIGHTE

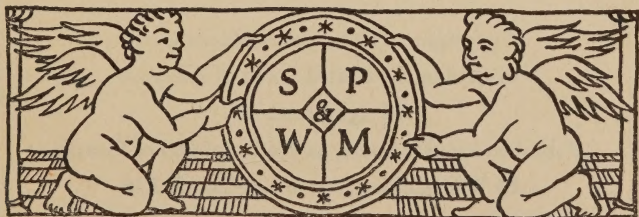
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WRITTEN BY WILLIAM ROPER, ESQUIRE,
WHICHE MARIED MARGREAT
DAUGHTER OF THE SAYED THOMAS MOORE

*

EDITED BY JAMES MASON CLINE

NEW YORK, 1950, THE SWALLOW PRESS
AND WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY



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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER

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PREFACE

The only justification I plead for this edition—indeed, the only excuse I offer for it—is that such a *good* book deserves to be better known.

Its history has not been conducive to popularity. Written about the time of Queen Elizabeth's accession, it was circulated for many years in manuscript; and not until 1626, long after the author's death, did a printed edition appear. This was unfortunately based on a very imperfect copy of the original manuscript—so imperfect as to offer a version which misrepresents even the essential *feeling* of Roper's Memoir. Nevertheless, its errors were perpetuated in subsequent editions throughout the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries; with the consequence that Roper's "Life," usually abbreviated and always defective, has survived even in our own day chiefly to adumbrate the author of the distinguished *Utopia*—not as a literary masterpiece worthy of consideration in its own right.

Indeed, until the publication of the Oxford edition in 1935,¹ no final literary evaluation of the work was possible, because no scientifically accurate version of the text existed—Roper's original copy having long since disappeared.

Very properly, Dr. Hitchcock's edition is addressed to the specialist. Hence it is not available to the general reader, nor easily intelligible to him. This is no disparagement, of course;

1. *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, knyghte*, edited from thirteen manuscripts by Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, Ph.D., D.Lit. Published for E.E.T.S., Oxford University Press. London. 1935.

on the contrary, Dr. Hitchcock's painstaking scholarship has made possible a volume like this one, which while scrupulously preserving the diction of the original, endeavors to remove some of the accidental barriers which mere time has raised between Roper's ancient book and his modern reader: very simply, to modernize its spelling, its punctuation,—its *shape* as a book.

But for all this pious intention, Roper's *More* remains "old." Nearly four centuries stand between its culture and our own, nor can the superficial modernizations which an honest editor is permitted to make in Roper's text, make Roper modern. He isn't. Intelligent editing can nevertheless remove some obstacles to the enduring truth he has told. It is distracting, for example, to read *In Continewans* for *In continuance*, and except for the historian, misleading; for it makes Roper appear more remote than he is. Nothing is lost to literature for the modernization, and something, I believe, is gained for the truth.

The scribes of the Roper manuscripts, like all Elizabethans, spelled phonetically—a characteristic which tends to accentuate unduly the archaism of their language. Actually Roper's diction is surprisingly modern; and although some of his words have lost the precise significance he attached to them, *every single one* is in our vocabulary, and may be found in Webster's *International Dictionary*, the standard for the orthography of this volume.

As with the spelling, so with the punctuation. The prose is *oral prose*—meant to be read aloud—and the pointing of the manuscripts is designed primarily to indicate the desirable pauses in the reader's voice; not, like ours, to stress the logical articulation of the sentence. Consequently, there is no warrant in the manuscripts for my punctuation, which is, frankly, impressionistic. But for modern readers I believe it fulfills Roper's *intention* better than an authentic or historical system, which they would not understand.

Again, there is no authority in the manuscripts for the division of the book into chapters. But such a division, if it helps the reader to orient himself in an unfamiliar literary form, seems a justifiable liberty for an editor to take. And furthermore, as I have argued in the concluding essay, even if there is no *textual* authority for these divisions, there is a very sound literary justification for the principle on which they are founded.

Finally, the critical essay itself is consistent with the whole intention of this book: to allow no merely accidental obscurity to becloud the essential beauty of Roper's work. It is unashamedly an essay on how to read his book. In the course of suggesting certain avenues of approach, it supplies a kind of information about More and his times which a contemporary reader may not be expected to possess, and which Roper confidently assumed was common knowledge among the intimate circle he was addressing. Nevertheless—"Look not for whales in the Euxine sea, nor expect great matters where they are not to be found." The essay is not written for those who do not need it. It is but a logical consequence of my whole assumption, that beneath this imperfect, obscure, and occasionally disproportioned Memoir, lies a truth of imperishable beauty. To release even some small portion of it to my contemporaries has seemed to me a good thing to do.

It must be confessed that my own contribution to this high endeavor is a very modest one. My immense indebtedness to Dr. Hitchcock is attested by every word in the text; and although the critical essay owes much to many, I must acknowledge, first and last, a special obligation to the following: first, to E.M.G. Routh, F.R.Hist.S., for assembling a learned and copious historical background,¹ and to Professor George R. Potter, my

1. *Sir Thomas More and his Friends*. Oxford University Press. London, 1934.

friend and colleague of nearly a quarter of a century, for his wise counsel and correction; last to the ARTS CLUB of the University of California, who heard the essay in one of its stages of completion, and characteristically bestowed upon it a criticism as discerning as it was spacious and exuberant.

J . M . C .

A PROLOGUE AND AN APOLOGY

Forasmuch as Sir Thomas More, knight, sometime Lord Chancellor of England, a man of singular virtue and of a clear unspotted conscience, as witnesseth Erasmus—'more pure and white than the whitest snow, and of such an angelical wit as England (he saith) never had the like before, nor never shall again:'

Universally, as well in the laws of our own Realm—a study in effect able to occupy the whole life of a man—as in all other sciences right well studied, was in his days accounted a man worthy perpetual famous memory:

I, William Roper (though most unworthy) his son-in-law by marriage of his eldest daughter, knowing at this day no one man living that of him and of his doings understood so much as myself—for that I was continually resident in his house by the space of sixteen years and more—thought it therefore my part to set forth such matters touching his life as I could at this present call to remembrance.

Among which things, very many notable things—not meet to have been forgotten—through negligence and long continuance of time are slipped out of my mind:

Yet to the intent the same should not all utterly perish, I have at the desire of divers worshipful friends of mine—though very far from the grace and worthiness of them—nevertheless, as far forth as my mean wit, memory, and knowledge would serve me, declared so much thereof as in my poor judgment seemed worthy to be remembered.

I

Portents and a Prophecy

This Sir Thomas More, after he had been brought up in the Latin tongue at St. Anthony's in London, was by his father's procurement received into the house of the right reverend, wise, and learned prelate, Cardinal Morton. Where, though he was young of years, yet would he at Christmas-tide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them—which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside. In whose wit and towardness, the Cardinal much delighting would often say of him unto the nobles that divers times dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man!"

Whereupon for his better furtherance in learning, he placed him at Oxford—where when he was both in the Greek and Latin tongue sufficiently instructed, he was then for the study of the law of the Realm, put to an Inn of Chancery called New Inn, where for his time he very well prospered; and from thence was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, with very small allowance, continuing there his study until he was made and accounted a worthy utter barrister.

After this, to his great commendation, he read for a good space a public lecture of St. Augustine—*De Civitate Dei*—in the Church of St. Lawrence in the Old Jewry; whereunto there resorted Dr. Grocyn, an excellent cunning man, and all the chief learned of the City of London.

Then was he made Reader of Furnival's Inn, so remaining by the space of three years and more.

After which time he gave himself to devotion and prayer in the Charter-house of London, religiously living there without vow about four years, until he resorted to the house of one Master Colt, a gentleman of Essex, that had oft invited him thither, having three daughters, whose honest conversation and virtuous education provoked him there specially to set his affection. And albeit his mind most served him to the second daughter—for that he thought her the fairest and best favoured—yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame also to the eldest to see her younger sister in marriage preferred before her, he then of a certain pity framed his fancy towards her, and soon after married her,—nevertheless discontinuing his study of the law at Lincoln's Inn, but applying still the same until he was called to the bench, and had read there twice,—which is as often as ordinarily any judge of the law doth read.

Before which time he had placed himself and his wife at Bucklersbury in London, where he had by her three daughters and one son, in virtue and learning brought up from their youth; whom he would often exhort to take virtue and learning for their meat, and play [but] for their sauce.

Who, ere ever he had been reader in Court, was in the latter time of King Henry the Seventh made a burgess of the Parliament, wherein there were by the King demanded (as I have heard reported) about three fifteenths for the marriage of his eldest daughter, that then should be the Scottish queen; at the last debating wherof, he made such arguments and reasons thereagainst, that the King's demands thereby were clean overthrown. So that one of the King's privy chamber, named

Master Tyler, being present thereat, brought word to the King out of the Parliament House that a beardless boy had disappointed all his purpose. Whereupon the King, conceiving great indignation towards him, could not be satisfied until he had some way revenged it. And, forasmuch as he nothing having, nothing could lose, his Grace devised a causeless quarrel against his father, keeping him in the Tower until he had made him pay to him an hundred pounds fine.

Shortly hereupon it fortun'd that this Sir Thomas More, coming in a suit to Dr. Fox, Bishop of Winchester, one of the King's Privy Council, the Bishop called him aside, and pretending great favor towards him, promised him that if he would be ruled by him, he would not fail into the King's favor again to restore him; meaning, as it was after conjectured, to cause him thereby to confess his offense against the King, whereby his Highness might with the better color have occasion to revenge his displeasure against him.

But when he came from the Bishop, he fell in communication with one Master Whitford, his familiar friend, then chaplain to that Bishop and after a Father of Sion, and showed him what the Bishop had said unto him, desiring to have his advice therein. Who, for the Passion of God prayed him in no wise to follow his counsel. "For my Lord, my master," quoth he, "to serve the King's turn, will not stick to agree to his own father's death!" So Sir Thomas More returned to the Bishop no more. And had not the King soon after died, he was determin'd to have gone over the sea, thinking that being in the King's indignation he could not live in England without great danger.

After this he was made one of the Undersheriffs of London, by which office and his learning together, as I have heard him say, he gained without grief not so little as four hundred pounds

by the year; sithe there was at that time in none of the Prince's courts of the laws of this Realm any matter of importance in controversy wherein he was not with the one part of counsel. Of whom, for his learning, wisdom, knowledge, and experience men had such estimation, that before he came to the service of King Henry the Eighth, at the suit and instance of the English Merchants, he was by the King's consent made twice ambassador in certain great causes between them and the merchants of the Steel-yard. Whose wise and discreet dealing therein, to his high commendation, coming to the King's understanding, provoked his Highness to cause Cardinal Wolsey—then Lord Chancellor—to procure him to his service.

And albeit the Cardinal, according to the King's request, earnestly travailed with him therefor—among many other his persuasions alleging unto him how dear his service must needs be unto his Majesty, which could not with his honor, with less than he should yearly lose thereby seem to recompense him. Yet he, loath to change his estate, made such means to the King by the Cardinal to the contrary, that his Grace, for that time, was well satisfied.

Now happened there after this a great ship of his that then was Pope to arrive at Southampton, which the King claiming for a forfeiture, the Pope's ambassador, by suit unto his Grace, obtained that he might for his master, the Pope, have counsel learned in the laws of this Realm, and the matter in his own presence—being himself a singular civilian—in some public place to be openly heard and discussed. At which time there could none of our law be found so meet to be of counsel with this ambassador as Sir Thomas More; who could report to the ambassador in Latin all the reasons and arguments by the learned counsel on both sides alleged. Upon this, the counsel-

lors of either part, in presence of the Lord Chancellor and other the judges, in the Star Chamber had audience accordingly.

Where Sir Thomas More not only declared to the ambassador the whole effect of all their opinions, but also in defense of the Pope's side argued so learnedly himself that both was the fore-said forfeiture to the Pope restored, and himself among all the hearers for his upright and commendable demeanor therein so greatly renowned, that for no entreaty would the King from thenceforth be induced any longer to forbear his service. At whose first entry thereunto he made him Master of the Requests, having then no better room void; and within a month after, Knight and one of his Privy Council.

And so from time to time was he by the Prince advanced, continuing in his singular favor and trusty service twenty years and above,—a good part whereof used the King upon holidays, when he had done his own devotions, to send for him into his travers; and there sometimes in matters of astronomy, geometry, divinity, and such other faculties, and sometimes of his wordly affairs to sit and confer with him. And other whiles would he in the night have him up into his leads, there for to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions and operations of the stars and planets.

And because he was of a pleasant disposition, it pleased the King and Queen after the Council had supped, at the time of their supper, for their pleasure commonly to call for him to be merry with them. Whom when he perceived so much in his talk to delight that he could not once in a month get leave to go home to his wife and children, whose company he most desired, and to be absent from the Court two days together but that he should be thither sent for again—he much misliking this restraint of his liberty began thereupon somewhat to

dissemble his nature; and so by little and little from his former accustomed mirth to disuse himself, that he was of them from thenceforth at such seasons no more so ordinarily sent for.

Then died one Master Weston, Treasurer of the Exchequer, whose office after his death the King, of his own offer, without any asking, freely gave unto Sir Thomas More.

II

King and Cardinal

In the fourteenth year of his Grace's reign was there a Parliament holden, whereof Sir Thomas More was chosen Speaker. Who, being very loath to take that room upon him, made an oration (not now extant) to the King's Highness for his discharge thereof; whereunto, when the King would not consent, he spake unto his Grace in the form following:

"Sithe I perceive, most redoubted Sovereign, that it standeth not with your high pleasure to reform this election and cause it to be changed, but have by the mouth of the Most Reverend Father in God, the legate, your Highness' Chancellor, thereunto given your most royal assent; and have of your benignity determined—far above that I may bear—to enable me, and for this office to repute me meet; rather than ye should seem to impute unto your Commons that they had unmeetly chosen, I am therefore, and alway shall be, ready obediently to conform myself to the accomplishment of your high commandment,—in my most humble wise beseeching your most noble Majesty that I may with your Grace's favour, before I farther enter thereunto, make mine humble intercession unto your Highness for two lowly petitions: the one, privately concerning myself; the other, the whole assembly of your Common House.

"For myself, gracious Sovereign: That if it mishap me, in any thing hereafter that is on the behalf of your Commons in your high presence to be declared, to mistake my message, and in the lack of good utterance, by my misrehearsal, to pervert or impair their prudent instructions, it may then like your most noble

Majesty, of your abundant grace, with the eye of your accustomed pity, to pardon my simpleness—giving me leave to repair again to the Common House and there to confer with them, and to take their substantial advice, what thing and in what wise, I shall on their behalf utter and speak before your noble Grace—to the intent their prudent devices and affairs be not by my simpleness and folly hindered or impaired. Which thing, if it should so mishap—as it were well likely to mishap in me, if your gracious benignity relieved not my over-sight—it could not fail to be during my life a perpetual grudge and heaviness to my heart—the help and remedy whereof, in manner aforesaid remembered, is, most gracious Sovereign, my first lowly suit and humble petition unto your most noble Grace.

“Mine other humble request, most excellent Prince, is this: Forasmuch as there be of your Commons, here by your high commandment assembled for your Parliament, a great number which are (after the accustomed manner) appointed in the Common House to treat and advise of the common affairs among themselves apart; and albeit, most dear Liege-lord, that according to your prudent advice—by your honourable writs everywhere declared—there hath been as due diligence used in sending up to your Highness’ Court of Parliament the most discreet persons out of every quarter that men could esteem meet thereunto,—whereby it is not to be doubted but that there is a very substantial assembly of right wise and politic persons; yet, most victorious Prince, sithe among so many wise men, neither is every man wise alike,—nor among so many men, like well-witted—every man like well-spoken. And it often happeneth that likewise, as much folly is uttered with painted, polished speech; so, many boisterous and rude in language see deep indeed, and give right substantial counsel.

“And sithe also in matters of great importance, the mind is often so occupied in the matter, that a man rather studieth *what* to say than *how*; by reason whereof the wisest man and the best-spoken in a whole country, fortuneth among [them], while

his mind is fervent in the matter, somewhat to speak in such wise as he would afterward wish to have been uttered otherwise; and yet no worse will had when he spake it, than he hath when he would so gladly change it.

"Therefore, most gracious Sovereign, considering that in your high Court of Parliament is nothing entreated but matter of weight and importance concerning your Realm and your own royal estate, it could not fail to let and put to silence from the giving of their advice and counsel many of your discreet Commons, to the great hindrance of the common affairs, except that every of your Commons were utterly discharged of all doubt and fear how any thing that it should happen them to speak should happen of your Highness to be taken. And in this point, though your well-known and proved benignity putteth every man in right good hope, yet such is the weight of the matter—such is the reverend dread that the timorous hearts of your natural subjects conceive toward your high Majesty, our most redoubted King and undoubted Sovereign—that they cannot in this point find themselves satisfied, except your gracious bounty therein declared, put away the scruple of their timorous minds, and animate and encourage them, and put them out of doubt.

"It may therefore like your most abundant Grace, our most benign and goodly King, to give to all your Commons here assembled, your most gracious license and pardon freely, without doubt of your dreadful displeasure, every man to discharge his conscience, and boldly in every thing incident among us to declare his advice; and whatsoever happen any man to say, that it may like your noble Majesty (of your inestimable goodness) to take all in good part—interpreting every man's words, how uncunningly soever they be couched, to proceed yet of good zeal towards the profit of your Realm and honour of your royal person, the prosperous estate and preservation whereof, most excellent Sovereign, is the thing which we all—your most humble and loving subjects—according to the most bounden duty of our natural allegiance most highly desire and pray for."

At this Parliament, Cardinal Wolsey found himself much grieved with the Burgesses thereof; for that nothing was so soon done or spoken therein, but that it was immediately blown abroad in every ale-house. It fortuneed at that Parliament a very great subsidy to be demanded; which the Cardinal fearing would not pass the Common House, determined for the furtherance thereof to be there personally present himself. Before whose coming, after long debating there—whether it were better but with a few of his lords (as the most opinion of the House was) or with his whole train, royally to receive him there amongst them—

“Masters,” quoth Sir Thomas More, “forasmuch as my lord Cardinal lately, ye wot well, laid to our charge the lightness of our tongues for things uttered out of this House, it shall not in my mind be amiss with all his pomp to receive him—with his maces, his pillars, his pole-axes, his crosses, his hat, and Great Seal, too—to the intent, if he find the like fault with us hereafter, we may be the bolder from ourselves to lay the blame on those that his Grace bringeth hither with him.” Whereunto the House wholly agreeing, he was received accordingly.

Where, after that he had in a solemn oration, by many reasons proved how necessary it was, the demand there moved to be granted—and further showed that less would not serve to maintain the Prince’s purpose—he, seeing the company sitting still silent, and thereunto nothing answering—and contrary to his expectation showing in themselves towards his requests no towardness of inclination, said unto them,

“Masters, you have many wise and learned men among you, and sithe I am from the King’s own person sent hither unto you for the preservation of yourselves and all the Realm, I think it meet you give me some reasonable answer.”

Whereat every man holding his peace, then began he to speak to one Master Marney, after Lord Marney. "How say you," quoth he, "Master Marney?" Who making him no answer neither, he severally asked the same question of divers others accounted the wisest of the company.

To whom, when none of them all would give so much as one word, being before agreed (as the custom was) by their Speaker to make answer,—

"Masters," quoth the Cardinal, "unless it be the manner of your House, as of likelihood it is, by the mouth of your Speaker, whom you have chosen for trusty and wise—as indeed he is—in such cases to utter your minds, here is without doubt a marvellous obstinate silence!"

And thereupon he required answer of Master Speaker; who first reverently upon his knees excusing the silence of the House; abashed at the presence of so noble a personage—able to amaze the wisest and best learned in a realm—and after by many probable arguments proving that for them to make answer was it neither expedient nor agreeable with the ancient liberty of the House; in conclusion, for himself showed that though they had all with their voices trusted him, yet except every one of them could put into his one head all their several wits, he alone in so weighty a matter was unmeet to make his Grace answer. Whereupon the Cardinal, displeased with Sir Thomas More, that had not in this Parliament in all things satisfied his desire, suddenly arose and departed; and after the Parliament ended, in his gallery at Whitehall in Westminster, uttered unto him his griefs, saying, "Would to God you had been at Rome, Master More, when I made you Speaker!"

"Your Grace not offended, so would I too, my Lord," quoth he. And to wind such quarrels out of the Cardinal's head, he

began to talk of that gallery, and said, "I like this gallery of yours, my Lord, much better than your gallery at Hampton Court." Wherewith so wisely brake he off the Cardinal's displeasing talk that the Cardinal at that present, as it seemed, wist not what more to say to him.

But for revengement of his displeasure, [he] counselled the King to send him ambassador into Spain, commending to his Highness his wisdom, learning, and meetness for that voyage; and the difficulty of the cause considered, none was there, he said, so well able to serve his Grace therein. Which, when the King had broken to Sir Thomas More, and that he had declared unto his Grace how unfit a journey it was for him—the nature of the country and disposition of his complexion so disagreeing together that he should never be likely to do his Grace acceptable service there, knowing right well that if his Grace sent him thither he should send him to his grave—but showing himself nevertheless ready, according to his duty (all were it with the loss of his life) to fulfill his Grace's pleasure in that behalf—the King, allowing well his answer, said unto him:

"It is not our meaning, Master More, to do you hurt; but to do you good would we be glad. We will therefore, for this purpose, devise upon some other, and employ your service otherwise."

And such entire favour did the King bear him that he made him Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster upon the death of Sir Richard Wingfield, who had that office before. And for the pleasure he took in his company, would his Grace suddenly sometimes come home to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him. Whither on a time, unlooked for he came to dinner to him; and after dinner, in a fair garden of his, walked with him by the space of an hour, holding his arm about his neck.

As soon as his Grace was gone, I, rejoicing thereat, told Sir Thomas More how happy he was whom the King had so familiarly entertained—as I never had seen him to do to any other except Cardinal Wolsey, whom I saw his Grace once walk with, arm in arm.

“I thank Our Lord, Son,” quoth he, “I find his Grace my very good lord indeed; and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as any subject within this realm. Howbeit, Son Roper, I may tell thee I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head could win him a castle in France (for then was there war between us), it should not fail to go!”

III

The Master of Chelsea

This Sir Thomas More, among all other his virtues, was of such meekness that if it had fortunèd him with any learned men resorting to him from Oxford, Cambridge, or elsewhere, as there did divers—some for desire of his acquaintance, some for the famous report of his wisdom and learning, and some for suits of the Universities—to have entered into argument (wherein few were comparable unto him) and so far to have discoursed with them therein that he might perceive they could not without some inconvenience hold out much further disputation against him; then, lest he should discomfort them—as he that sought not his own glory, but rather would seem conquered than to discourage students in their studies, ever showing himself more desirous to learn than to teach—would he by some witty device courteously break off into some other matter and give over.

Of whom, for his wisdom and learning, had the King such an opinion, that at such time as he attended upon his Highness, taking his progress either to Oxford or Cambridge, where he was received with very eloquent orations, his Grace would always assign him—as one that was prompt and ready therein—*ex tempore* to make answer thereunto. Whose manner was, whensoever he had occasion either here or beyond the [seas] to be in any university, not only to be present at the reading and disputations there commonly used, but also learnedly to dispute among them himself. Who, being Chancellor of the

Duchy, was made ambassador twice—joined in commission with Cardinal Wolsey; once to the Emperor Charles into Flanders, the other time to the French king into France.

I

Not long after this, the Water-bailly of London—sometime his servant—hearing where he had been at dinner, certain merchants liberally to rail against his old master, waxed so discontented therewith that he hastily came to him and told him what he had heard.

“And were I, Sir,” quoth he, “in such favor and authority with my Prince as you are, such men surely should not be suffered so villainously and falsely to misreport and slander me. Wherefore, I would wish you to call them before you, and to their shame for their lewd malice to punish them.”

Who, smiling upon him said, “*Why*, Master Water-bailly, would you have me punish those by whom I receive more benefit than by you all that be my friends? Let them, a God’s name, speak as lewdly as they list of me, and shoot never so many arrows at me; as long as they do not hit me, what am I the worse? But if they should once hit me, then would it indeed not a little trouble me. Howbeit, I trust by God’s help, there shall none of them all, once be able to touch me. I have more cause, I assure thee, Master Water-bailly, to pity them than to be angry with them.” Such fruitful communication had he oft-times with his familiar friends.

So on a time, walking with me along the Thames-side at Chelsea, in talking of other things he said unto me, “Now would to Our Lord, Son Röper, upon condition that three things were well established in Christendom, I were put in a sack and here presently cast into the Thames!”

"What great things be those, Sir," quoth I, "that should move you so to wish?"

"Wouldst thou know what they be, Son Roper?" quoth he.

"Yea, marry, with good will, Sir, if it please you," quoth I.

"In faith, Son, they be these," said he. "The first is, that where the most part of Christian princes be at mortal war, they were all at an universal peace.

"The second, that where the Church of Christ is at this present sore afflicted with many errors and heresies, it were settled in a perfect uniformity of religion.

"The third, that where the King's matter of his marriage is now come in question, it were, to the glory of God and quietness of all parts, brought to a good conclusion." Whereby, as I could gather, he judged that otherwise it would be a disturbance to a great part of Christendom.

Thus did it by his doings, throughout the whole course of his life appear, that all his travail and pains, without respect of earthly commodities either to himself or any of his, were only upon the service of God, the Prince, and the Realm wholly bestowed and employed; whom I heard in his [latter] time to say that he never asked the King for himself the value of one penny.

II

As Sir Thomas More's custom was daily, if he were at home, besides his private prayers, with his children to say the Seven Psalms, Litany and Suffrages following; so was his guise nightly, before he went to bed, with his wife, children, and household to go to his chapel, and there upon his knees ordinarily to say certain psalms and collects with them. And because he was desirous for godly purposes sometime to be solitary and sequester

himself from worldly company, a good distance from his mansion-house builded he a place called the New Building, wherein there was a chapel, a library, and a gallery. In which, as his use was upon other days to occupy himself in prayer and study together; so on the Friday, there usually continued he from morning till evening, spending his time only in devout prayers and spiritual exercises.

And to provoke his wife and children to the desire of heavenly things, he would sometimes use these words unto them:

“It is now no mastery for you children to go to heaven, for everybody giveth you good counsel, everybody giveth you good example; you see virtue rewarded and vice punished; so that you are carried up to heaven even by the chins. But if you live the time that no man will give you good counsel, nor no man will give you good example—when you shall see virtue punished and vice rewarded—if you will then stand fast and firmly stick to God, upon pain of my life, though you be but half good, God will allow you for whole good!”

If his wife or any of his children had been diseased or troubled, he would say unto them, “We may not look at our pleasure to go to heaven in featherbeds; it is not the way! For our Lord Himself went thither with great pain, and by many tribulations, which was the path wherein he walked thither; [and] the servant may not look to be in better case than his master.” And as he would in this sort persuade them to take their troubles patiently, so would he in like sort teach them to withstand the devil and his temptations valiantly; saying,

“Whosoever will mark the devil and his temptations, shall find him therein much like to an ape. For like as an ape, not well looked unto, will be busy and bold to do shrewd turns,

and contrariwise being spied will suddenly leap back and adventure no farther; so the devil finding a man idle, slothful, and without resistance ready to receive his temptations, waxeth so hardy that he will not fail still to continue with him, until to his purpose he have thoroughly brought him. But on the other side, if he see a man with diligence persevere to prevent and withstand his temptations, he waxeth so weary that in conclusion he utterly forsaketh him. For as the devil, of disposition, is a spirit of so high a pride that he cannot abide to be mocked, so is he of nature so envious that he feareth any more to assault him, lest he should thereby not only catch a foul fall himself, but also minister to the man more matter of merit."

Thus delighted he evermore, not only in virtuous exercises to be occupied himself, but also to exhort his wife, children, and household to embrace and follow the same.

To whom for his notable virtue and godliness, God showed, as it seemed, a manifest miraculous token of His special favour towards him, at such time as my wife, as many other that year were, was sick of the sweating sickness. Who, lying in so great extremity of that disease, as by no invention or devices that physicians in such cases commonly use (of whom she had divers both expert, wise, and well-learned then continually attendant about her) she could be kept from sleep; so that both physicians and all other there despaired of her recovery, and gave her over—her father, as he that most entirely tendered her, being in no small heaviness for her, by prayer at God's hand sought to get her remedy.

Whereupon, going up after his usual manner into his fore-said New Building, there in his chapel upon his knees, with tears most devoutly besought almighty God that it would like His goodness—unto Whom nothing was impossible—if it were

His blessed will at his mediation to vouchsafe graciously to hear his humble petition. Where incontinent came into his mind that a clyster should be the only way to help her. Which, when he told the physicians, they by and by confessed that if there were any hope of health, that was the very best help indeed; much marveling of themselves that they had not before remembered it.

Then was it immediately ministered unto her sleeping, which she could by no means have been brought unto waking. And albeit after that she was thereby thoroughly awaked, God's marks, an evident undoubted token of death plainly appeared upon her; yet she contrary to all their expectations was, as it was thought, by her father's fervent prayer, miraculously recovered and at length again to perfect health restored. Whom, if it had pleased God at that time to have taken to His mercy, her father said he would never have meddled with worldly matters after.

IV

The Royal Marriage

Now while Sir Thomas More was Chancellor of the Duchy, the See of Rome chanced to be void, which was cause of much trouble. For Cardinal Wolsey, a man very ambitious and desirous—as good hope and likelihood he had—to aspire unto that dignity, perceiving himself of his expectation disappointed by means of the Emperor Charles so highly commending one Cardinal Adrian—sometime his schoolmaster—to the Cardinals of Rome in the time of their election, for his virtue and worthiness, that thereupon was he chosen Pope; who from Spain, where he was then resident, coming on foot to Rome, before his entry into the city, did put off his hosen and shoes, barefoot and barelegged passing through the streets towards his palace with such humbleness that all the people had him in great reverence—Cardinal Wolsey, I say, waxed so wood therewith, that he studied to invent all ways of revengement of his grief against the Emperor; which, as it was the beginning of a lamentable tragedy, so some part [thereof] as not impertinent to my present purpose, I reckoned requisite here to put in remembrance.

I

This Cardinal, therefore (not ignorant of the King's inconstant and mutable disposition, soon inclined to withdraw his devotion from his own most noble, virtuous, and lawful wife, Queen Katherine—aunt to the Emperor—upon every light occasion;

and upon other—to her in nobility, wisdom, virtue, favour, and beauty far incomparable—to fix his affection) meaning to make this his so light disposition an instrument to bring about his ungodly intent, devised to allure the King, then already (contrary to his mind, nothing less looking for) falling in love with the Lady Anne Bullen, to cast fantasy to one of the French King's sisters. Which thing, because of the enmity and war that was at that time between the French King and the Emperor—whom for the cause afore remembered, he mortally maligned—he was very desirous to procure. And for the better achieving thereof requested Langland, Bishop of Lincoln and ghostly father to the King, to put a scruple into his Grace's head, that it was not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife.

Which the King, not sorry to hear of, opened it first to Sir Thomas More, whose counsel he required therein, showing him certain places of Scripture that somewhat seemed to serve his appetite. Which when he had perused, and thereupon, as one that had never professed the study of divinity, himself excused to be unmeet many ways to meddle with such matters, the King, not satisfied with this answer, so sore still pressed upon him therefor, that in conclusion he condescended to his Grace's motion. And further, forasmuch as the case was of such importance as needed great advisement and deliberation, he besought his Grace of sufficient respite advisedly to consider it. Wherewith the King well-contented, said unto him that Tunstall and Clarke, Bishops of Durham and Bath, with other learned of his Privy Council, should also be dealers therein.

So Sir Thomas More departing conferred those places of Scripture with expositions of divers of the old holy doctors. And at his coming to the Court, in talking with his Grace of the aforesaid matter, he said, "To be plain with your Grace, neither

my Lord of Durham nor my Lord of Bath, though I know them both to be wise, virtuous, learned, and honourable prelates, nor myself, with the rest of your Council, being all your Grace's own servants, for your manifold benefits daily bestowed on us so most bounden to you, be in my judgment, meet counsellors for your Grace herein. But if your Grace mind to understand the truth, such counsellors may you have devised, as neither for respect of their own worldly commodity, nor for fear of your princely authority will be inclined to deceive you."

To whom he named then St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and divers other old holy doctors, both Greeks and Latins; and moreover showed him what authorities he had gathered out of them. Which, although the King, as disagreeable with his desire, did not very well like of, yet were they by Sir Thomas More, who in all his communication with the King in that matter had always most discreetly behaved himself, so wisely tempered, that he both presently took them in good part, and oft-times had thereof conference with him again.

II

After this were there certain questions among his council proponed, Whether the King needed in this case to have any scruple at all; and, if he had, what way were best to be taken to deliver him of it? The most part of whom were of opinion that there was good cause of scruple, and that for discharging of it, suit were meet to be made to the See of Rome, where the King hoped by liberality to obtain his purpose. Wherein, as it after appeared, he was far deceived.

Then was there, for the trial and examination of this matrimony, procured from Rome a commission, in which Cardinal Campegius and Cardinal Wolsey were joined commissioners.

Who, for the determination thereof, sate at the Blackfriars in London; where a libel was put in for the annulling of the said matrimony, alleging the marriage between the King and Queen to be unlawful. And for proof of the marriage to be lawful, was there brought in a dispensation, in which, after divers disputations thereon holden, there appeared an imperfection; which by an instrument or brief, upon search found in the treasury of Spain and sent to the commissioners into England, was supplied. And so should judgment have been given by the Pope accordingly, had not the King upon intelligence thereof, before the same judgment, appealed to the next general council. After whose appellation, the Cardinal upon that matter sate no longer.

It fortun'd before the matter of the said matrimony brought in question, when I in talk with Sir Thomas More, of a certain joy commended unto him the happy estate of [the] Realm, that had so catholic a prince that no heretic durst show his face, so virtuous and learned a clergy, so grave and sound a nobility, and so loving, obedient subjects all in one faith agreeing together:

"Troth, it is indeed, Son Roper," quoth he, and in commending all degrees and estates of the same went far beyond me. "And yet, Son Roper, I pray God," said he, "that some of us, as high as we seem to sit upon the mountains, treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we gladly would wish to be at a league and composition with them to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be content to let us have ours quietly to ourselves."

After that I had told him many considerations why he had no cause so to say—"Well," said he, "I pray God, Son Roper, some of us live not till that day," showing me no reason why he should put any doubt therein. To whom I said, "By my troth,

Sir, it is very desperately spoken!" That vile term, I cry God mercy, did I give him. Who, by these words perceiving me in a fume, said merrily unto me: "Well, well, Son Roper, it shall not be so; it shall not be so!" Whom, in sixteen years and more being in house conversant with him, I could never perceive as much as once in a fume.

III

But now to return again where I left. After the supplying of the imperfections of the dispensation sent, as is before rehearsed, to the commissioners into England, the King, taking the matter for ended and then meaning no farther to proceed in that matter, assigned the Bishop of Durham and Sir Thomas More to go ambassadors to Cambrai—a place neither imperial nor French—to treat a peace between the Emperor, the French King, and him. In the concluding whereof, Sir Thomas More so worthily handled himself—procuring in our league far more benefits unto this Realm than at that time by the King or his Council was thought possible to be compassed,—that for his good service in that voyage, the King when he after made him Lord Chancellor, caused the Duke of Norfolk openly to declare unto the people (as you shall hear hereafter more at large) how much all England was bound unto him.

Now upon the coming home of the Bishop of Durham and Sir Thomas More from Cambrai, the King was as earnest in persuading Sir Thomas More to agree unto the matter of his marriage as before—by many and divers ways provoking him thereunto. For the which cause, as it was thought, he the rather soon after made him Lord Chancellor. And further declaring unto him that though at his going over sea to Cambrai he was

in utter despair thereof, yet he had conceived since, some good hope to compass it.

For albeit his marriage, being against the positive laws of the Church and the written laws of God, was holpen by the dispensation, yet was there another thing found out of late, he said, whereby his marriage appeared to be so directly against the law of nature that it could in no wise by the Church be dispensable,—as Dr. Stokesley, whom he had then preferred to be Bishop of London and in that case chiefly credited, was able to instruct him—with whom he prayed him in that point to confer. But for all his conference with him, he saw nothing of such force as could induce him to change his opinion therein. Which notwithstanding, the Bishop showed himself in his report of him to the King's Highness so good and favourable, that he said he found him in his Grace's cause very toward, and desirous to find some good matter wherewith he might truly serve his Grace to his contentation.

V

Lord Chancellor of England

This Bishop Stokesley, being by the Cardinal not long before in the Star Chamber openly put to rebuke, and awarded to the Fleet—not brooking this contumelious usage, and thinking that forasmuch as the Cardinal, for lack of such forwardness in setting forth the King's divorce as his Grace looked for, was out of his Highness' favour he had now a good occasion offered him to revenge his quarrel against him,—further to incense the King's displeasure towards him, busily travailed to invent some colourable device for the King's furtherance in that behalf. Which, as before is mentioned, he to his Grace revealed, hoping thereby to bring the King to the better liking of himself, and the more misliking of the Cardinal; whom his Highness therefore soon after of his office displaced, and to Sir Thomas More, the rather to move him to incline to his side, the same in his stead committed.

Who, between the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, being brought through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery, the Duke of Norfolk in audience of all the people there assembled, showed that he was from the King himself straitly charged by special commission, there openly in presence of them all, to make declaration how much all England was beholden to Sir Thomas More for his good service, and how worthy he was to have the highest room in the Realm, and how dearly his Grace loved and trusted him—for which, said the Duke, he had great cause to rejoice.

Whereunto Sir Thomas More, among many other his humble and wise sayings not now in my memory, answered, That although he had good cause to take comfort of his Highness' singular favour towards him; that he had far above his deserts so highly commended him—to whom therefore he acknowledged himself most deeply bounden; yet, nevertheless, he must for his own part needs confess, that in all things by his Grace alleged, he had done no more than was his duty—and further disabled himself as unmeet for that room, wherein, considering how wise and honourable a prelate had lately before taken so great a fall, he had, he said, thereof no cause to rejoice.

And as they had before on the King's behalf charged *him* uprightly to minister indifferent justice to the people, without corruption or affection; so did he likewise charge *them* again, that if they saw him at any time in any thing digress from any part of his duty in that honourable office, even as they would discharge their own duty and fidelity to God and the King, so should they not fail to disclose it to his Grace, who otherwise might have just occasion to lay his fault wholly to their charge.

I

While he was Lord Chancellor, being at leisure—as seldom he was—one of his sons-in-law on a time said merrily unto him, “When Cardinal Wolsey was Lord Chancellor, not only divers of his Privy Chamber, but such also as were his doorkeepers got great gain.” And since he had married one of his daughters and gave still attendance upon him, he thought he might of reason look for some; where he, indeed, because he was so ready *himself* to hear every man, poor and rich, and kept no doors shut from them, could find none—which was to him a great discouragement. And whereas else, some for friendship, some

for kindred, and some for profit, would gladly have had his furtherance in bringing them to his presence, if he should now take anything of them, he knew, he said, he should do them great wrong; for that they might do as much for themselves as he could do for them. Which condition, although he thought in Sir Thomas More very commendable, yet to him, said he, being his son, he found it nothing profitable.

When he had told him this tale, "You say well, Son," quoth he. "I do not mislike that you are of conscience so scrupulous. But many other ways be there, Son, that I may both do yourself good, and pleasure your friend also. For sometime may I by my word stand your friend in stead, and sometime may I by my letter help him. Or if he have a cause depending before me, at your request I may hear him before another. Or if his cause be not all the best, yet may I move the parties to fall to some reasonable end by arbitrament. Howbeit, this one thing, Son, I assure thee on my faith, that if the parties will at my hands call for justice, then all were it my father stood on the one side, and the devil on the tother, his cause being good, the devil should have right!" So offered he his son, as he thought, he said, as much favour as with reason he could require.

And that he would for no respect digress from justice well appeared by a plain example of another of his sons-in-law, called Master Heron. For when he, having a matter before him in the Chancery and presuming too much of his favour, would by him in nowise be persuaded to agree to any indifferent order, then made he in conclusion a flat decree against him.

This Lord Chancellor used commonly every afternoon to sit in his open hall, to the intent that if any persons had any suit unto him, they might the more boldly come to his presence and there open their complaints before him. Whose manner was

also to read every bill himself, ere he would award any *sub-poena*—which bearing matter sufficient worthy a *sub-poena*, would he set his hand unto or else cancel it.

Whensoever he passed through Westminster Hall to his place in the Chancery by the Court of the King's Bench, if his father, one of the judges thereof, had been sate ere he came, he would go into the same Court, and there reverently kneeling down in the sight of them all, duly ask his father's blessing. And if it fortune that his father and he at readings in Lincoln's Inn met together, as they sometimes did, notwithstanding his high office, he would offer in argument the pre-eminence to his father—though he, for his office's sake, would refuse to take it. And for the better declaration of his natural affection towards his father, he not only, while he lay on his death bed, according to his duty, oft times with comfortable words most kindly came to visit him; but also at his departure out of the world, with tears taking him about the neck, most lovingly kissed and embraced him—commending him into the merciful hands of almighty God and so departed from him.

And as few injunctions as he granted while he was Lord Chancellor, yet were they by some of the judges of the law misliked; which I understanding, declared the same to Sir Thomas More. Who answered me that they should have little cause to find fault with him therefor. And thereupon caused he one Master Croke, chief of the six clerks, to make a docket containing the whole number and causes of all such injunctions as, either in his time had already passed or at that present depended in any of the King's Courts at Westminster before him.

Which done, he invited all the judges to dine with him in the Council Chamber at Westminster. Where, after dinner, when he had broken with them what complaints he had heard

of his injunctions, and moreover showed them both the number and causes of every one of them in order,—so plainly that upon full debating of those matters, they were all enforced to confess that they in like case could have done no otherwise themselves. Then offered he this unto them: That if the justices of every court—unto whom the reformation of the rigour of the law, by reason of their office, most especially appertained—would upon reasonable considerations, by their own discretions—as they were, as he thought, in conscience bound—mitigate and reform the rigour of the law themselves, there should from thence forth by him, no more injunctions be granted. Whereunto they refused to condescend.

Then said he unto them: “Forasmuch as yourselves, my Lords, drive me to that necessity for awarding out injunctions to relieve the people’s injury, you cannot hereafter any more justly blame me!” After that he said secretly unto me, “I perceive, Son, why they like not so to do. For they see that they may by the verdict of the jury, cast off all quarrels from themselves upon *them*, which they account their chief defense. And therefore am I compelled to abide the adventure of all such reports.”

II

And as little leisure as he had to be occupied in the study of Holy Scripture and controversies upon religion and such other virtuous exercises, being in manner continually busied about the affairs of the King and the Realm; yet such watch and pain in setting forth of divers profitable works in defense of the true Christian religion, against heresies secretly sown abroad in the Realm assuredly sustained he, that the bishops—to whose pastoral cure the reformation thereof principally appertained—

thinking themselves by his travail, wherein by their own confession they were not able with him to make comparison, of their duties in that behalf discharged; and considering that for all his Prince's favour he was no rich man, nor in yearly revenues advanced as his worthiness deserved: therefore, at a convocation among themselves and other of the clergy, they agreed together and concluded upon a sum of four or five thousand pounds at the least, to my remembrance, for his pains to recompense him. To the payment whereof, every bishop, abbot, and the rest of the clergy were, after the rate of their abilities, liberal contributories; hoping this portion should be to his contentation.

Whereupon Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, Clarke, Bishop of Bath, and as far as I can call to mind, Vaysey, Bishop of Exeter, repaired unto him declaring how thankfully for his travails, to their discharge in God's cause bestowed, they reckoned themselves bounden to consider him; and that albeit they could not, according to his deserts so worthily as they gladly would, requite him therefor—but must reserve that only to the goodness of God; yet for a small part of recompense—in respect of his estate so unequal to his worthiness—in the name of their whole convocation they presented unto him that sum, which they desired him to take in good part.

Who, forsaking it, said, that like as it was no small comfort unto him that so wise and learned men so well accepted his simple doings, for which he never intended to receive reward but at the hands of God only—to whom alone was the thank thereof chiefly to be ascribed; so gave he most humble thanks to their honours all, for their so bountiful and friendly consideration.

When they for all their importune pressing upon him, that

few would have weened he could have refused it, could by no means make him to take it; then besought they him, to be content yet that they might bestow it upon his wife and children.

"Not so, my Lords," quoth he. "I had liefer see it all cast into the Thames, than I or any of mine should have thereof the worth of one penny. For though your offer, my Lords, be indeed very friendly and honourable, yet set I so much by my pleasure, and so little by my profit, that I would not, in good faith, for so much—and much more too—have lost the rest of so many nights' sleep as was spent upon the same. And yet, wish would I, for all that, upon condition that all heresies were suppressed, that all my books were burned and my labour utterly lost."

Thus departing were they fain to restore unto every man his own again.

This Lord Chancellor, albeit he was to God and the world well-known of notable virtue—though not so of every man considered; yet for the avoiding of singularity would he appear none otherwise than other men in his apparel and other behaviour. And albeit outwardly he appeared honourable, like one of his calling; yet inwardly, he no such vanities esteeming, secretly next his body wear a shirt of hair. Which my sister More (a young gentlewoman) in the summer as he sat at supper, singly in his doublet and hose, wearing thereupon a plain shirt, without ruff or collar—chancing to spy, began to laugh at it. My wife, not ignorant of his manner, perceiving the same, privily told him of it. And he being sorry that she saw it, presently amended it.

He used also sometimes to punish his body with whips, the cords knotted; which was known only to my wife, his eldest daughter, whom for her secrecy above all other he specially

trusted—causing her as need required to wash the same shirt of hair.

III

Now shortly upon his entry into the high office of the chancellorship, the King yet eftsoons again moved him to weigh and consider his great matter. Who falling down upon his knees, humbly besought his Highness to stand his gracious sovereign, as he ever since his entry into his Grace's service had found him; saying there was nothing in the world had been so greivous unto his heart as to remember he was not able—as he willingly would with the loss of one of his limbs—for that matter any thing to find, whereby he could with his conscience safely serve his Grace's contentation,—as he that always bear in mind the most goodly words that his Highness spake unto him at his first coming into his noble service—the most virtuous lesson that ever prince taught his servant—willing him first to look unto God, and after God to him; as in good faith, he said, he did, or else might his Grace well account him his most unworthy servant.

To this the King answered, that if he could not therein with his conscience serve him, he was content to accept his service otherwise; and using the advice of other of his learned Council, whose consciences could well enough agree therewith, would nevertheless continue his gracious favour towards him, and never with that matter molest his conscience after.

VI

'Madame, my Lord is Gone!'

But Sir Thomas More in process of time, seeing the King fully determined to proceed forth in the marriage of Queen Anne; and when he with the bishops and nobles of the higher house of Parliament were, for the furtherance of that marriage, commanded by the King to go down to the Common House to show unto them both what the Universities, as well as other parts beyond the seas, as of Oxford and Cambridge, had done in that behalf, and their seals also testifying the same—all which matters at the King's request (not showing of what mind himself was therein) he opened to the lower house of the Parliament: nevertheless, doubting lest further attempts after should follow, which contrary to his conscience, by reason of his office, he was likely to be put unto, he made suit unto the Duke of Norfolk, his singular dear friend, to be a mean to the King that he might with his Grace's favour be discharged of that chargeable room of the chancellorship, wherein for certain infirmities of his body, he pretended himself unable any longer to serve.

This Duke, coming on a time to Chelsea to dine with him, fortun'd to find him at the church, singing in the choir, with a surplice on his back. To whom, after service, as they went homeward together, arm in arm, the Duke said, "God's body, God's body, my Lord Chancellor! A parish clerk? A parish clerk? You dishonour the King and his office!"

"Nay," quoth Sir Thomas More, smiling upon the Duke, "your Grace may not think that the King, your master and

mine, will with me for serving of God, *his* master, be offended, or thereby count his office dishonoured!”

When the Duke, being thereunto often solicited, by importunate suit had at length of the King obtained for Sir Thomas More a clear discharge of his office, then at a time convenient, by his Highness’ appointment repaired he to his Grace to yield up unto him the Great Seal. Which, as his Grace with thanks and praise for his worthy service in that office, courteously at his hands received, so pleased it his Highness further to say unto him, that for the service that he before had done him, in any suit which he should after have unto him, that either should concern his honour—for that word it liked his Highness to use unto him—or that should appertain unto his profit, he should find his Highness good and gracious lord unto him.

After he had thus given over the chancellorship, and placed all his gentlemen and yeomen with bishops and noblemen, and his eight watermen with the Lord Audley, that in the same office succeeded him, to whom also he gave his great barge; then calling us all that were his children unto him, and asking our advice, how we might now, in this decay of his ability—by the surrender of his office so impaired that he could not as he was wont, and gladly would, bear out the whole charges of them all himself—from thenceforth be able to live and continue together, as he wished we should; when he saw us silent, and in that case not ready to show our opinions to him, “Then will I,” said he, “show my poor mind unto you.

“I have been brought up,” quoth he, “at Oxford, at an Inn of Chancery, at Lincoln’s Inn, and also in the King’s Court, —and so forth from the lowest degree to the highest; and yet have I in yearly revenues at this present left me little above an hundred pounds by the year. So that now must we hereafter, if

we like to live together, be contented to become contributories together. But, by my counsel, it shall not be best for us to fall to the lowest fare first.

"We will not therefore descend to Oxford fare, nor to the fare of New Inn. But we will begin with Lincoln's Inn diet, where many right worshipful and of good years do live full well. Which, if we find not ourselves the first year able to maintain, then will we the next year go one step down to New Inn fare, wherewith many an honest man is well contented. If that exceed our ability, too, then will we the next year after descend to Oxford fare,—where many grave, learned, and ancient fathers be continually conversant. Which, if our power stretch not to maintain neither, then may we yet, with bags and wallets, go a-begging together and hoping that for pity some good folk will give us their charity—at every man's door to sing *Salve Regina*, and so still keep company and be merry together."

And whereas you have heard before, he was by the King from a very worshipful living taken into his Grace's service, with whom in all the great and weighty causes that concerned his Highness or the Realm, he consumed and spent with painful cares, travails, and troubles, as well beyond the seas as within the Realm, in effect the whole substance of his life; yet with all the gain he got thereby—being never wasteful spender thereof—was he not able after the resignation of his office of the Lord Chancellor, for the maintenance of himself and such as necessarily belonged unto him, sufficiently to find meat, drink, fuel, apparel, and such other necessary charges.

All the land that ever he purchased—which also he purchased before he was Lord Chancellor—was not, I am well assured, above the value of twenty marks by the year. And after his

debts paid, he had not, I know, his chain accepted, in gold and silver left him the worth of one hundred pounds.

And whereas upon the holidays, during his high chancellorship one of his gentlemen, when service at the church was done, ordinarily used to come to my Lady his wife's pew, and say unto her, "Madam, my Lord is gone,"—the next holiday after the surrender of his office and departure of his gentlemen, *he* came unto my Lady his wife's pew himself, and making a low curtsy, said unto her, "Madam, my Lord is gone!"

VII

'Sonne Roßer . . . the feilde is wonne!'

In the time somewhat before his trouble, he would talk with his wife and children of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell—of the lives of holy martyrs, of their grievous martyrdoms, of their marvellous patience; and of their passions and deaths that they suffered rather than they would offend God,—and what an happy and blessed thing it was, for the love of God to suffer loss of goods, imprisonment—loss of lands, and life also. He would further say unto them, that upon his faith, if he might perceive his wife and children would encourage him to die in a good cause, it should so comfort him, that for very joy thereof, it would make him merrily run to death. He showed them afore what trouble might fall unto him; wherewith, and the like virtuous talk, he had so long before his trouble encouraged them, that when he after fell into the trouble indeed, his trouble to them was a great deal the less: *Quia spicula previsa minus laedant.*

Now upon this resignation of his office, came Master Thomas Cromwell (then in the King's high favour) to Chelsea to him with a message from the King. Wherein when they had thoroughly communed together: "Master Cromwell," quoth he, "you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise, and liberal prince. If you will follow my poor advice, you shall in your counsel-giving unto his Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do but never what he is able to do. So shall you show yourself a true, faithful servant and a right worthy

counsellor. For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him."

Shortly thereupon was there a commission directed to Cranmer, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to determine the matter of the matrimony between the King and Queen Katherine at St. Albans; where, according to the King's mind, it was thoroughly determined. Who, pretending he had no justice at the Pope's hands, from thenceforth sequestered himself from the See of Rome, and so married the Lady Anne Bullen. Which Sir Thomas More understanding, said unto me, "God give grace, Son, that these matters within a while be not confirmed with oaths!" I at that time seeing no likelihood thereof, yet fearing lest for his fore-speaking, it would the sooner come to pass, waxed therefore for his so saying much offended with him.

I

It fortun'd not long before the coming of Queen Anne through the streets of London, from the Tower to Westminster to her coronation, that he received a letter from the Bishops of Durham, Bath, and Winchester, requesting him both to keep them company from the Tower to the coronation, and also to take twenty pounds that by the bearer thereof they had sent him to buy him a gown with. Which he thankfully receiving, and at home still tarrying, at their next meeting said merrily unto them:

"My Lords, in the letters which you lately sent me, you required two things of me; the one whereof, since I was so well-content to grant you, the tother therefore, I thought I might be the bolder to deny you. And like as the one—because I took you for no beggars, and myself I knew to be no rich man—I thought I might the rather fulfill, so the other did put me in

remembrance of an emperor that had ordained a law that whosoever committed a certain offense—which I now remember not—except it were a virgin, should suffer the pains of death. Such a reverence had he to virginity.

“Now so it happened that the first committer of that offense was indeed a virgin; whereof the emperor hearing was in no small perplexity, as he that by some example fain would have had that law to have been put in execution. Whereupon when his council had sat long, solemnly debating this case, suddenly arose there up one of his council—a good plain man among them, and said, ‘Why make you so much ado, my Lords, about so small a matter? Let her first be deflowered, and then after, may she be devoured!’

“And so, though your Lordships have in the matter of the matrimony hitherto kept yourselves pure virgins, yet take good heed, my Lords, that you keep your virginity still! For some there be that by procuring your Lordships first at the coronation to be present, and next to preach for the setting forth of it, and finally to write books to all the world in defense thereof, are desirous to deflower you. And when they have deflowered you, then will they not fail soon after to devour you. Now my Lords,” quoth he, “it lieth not in my power but that they may devour me; but God being my good Lord, *I will provide that they shall never deflower me!*”

In continuance.

When the King saw that he could by no manner of benefits win him to his side, then, lo, went he about by terrors and threats to drive him thereunto. The beginning of which trouble grew by occasion of a certain nun, dwelling in Canterbury,—for her virtue and holiness among the people not a little esteemed. Unto whom, for that cause, many religious persons—

doctors of divinity and divers others of good worship of the laity used to resort. Who, affirming that she had revelations from God to give the King warning of his wicked life, and of the abuse of the sword and authority committed unto him by God; and understanding my Lord of Rochester, Bishop Fisher, to be a man of notable virtuous living and learning, repaired to Rochester and there disclosed to him all her revelations,—desiring his advice and counsel therein.

Which the Bishop perceiving might well stand with the laws of God and his Holy Church, advised her—as she before had warning and intended—to go to the King herself, and let him understand the whole circumstance thereof. Whereupon she went to the King and told him all her revelations, and so returned home again. And in short space after, she, making a voyage to the nuns of Sion, by means of one Master Reynolds, a father of the same House, there fortunèd concerning such secrets as had been revealed unto her (some part whereof seemed to touch the matter of the King's supremacy and marriage, which shortly thereupon followed) to enter into talk with Sir Thomas More.

Who, notwithstanding he might well at that time, without danger of any law—though after, as himself had prognosticated before, those matters were established by statutes and confirmed by oaths—freely and safely have talked with her therein; nevertheless, in all the communication between them—as in process it appeared—had always so discreetly demeaned himself that he deserved not to be blamed, but contrariwise to be commended and praised.

II

And had he not been one that in all his great offices and doings for the King and the Realm, so many years together, had from

all corruption of wrong-doing or bribes-taking kept himself so clear that no man was able therewith once to blemish him, or make any just quarrel against him, it would without doubt in this troublous time of the King's indignation towards him, have been deeply laid to his charge, and of the King's Highness most favourably accepted. As in the case of one Parnell it most manifestly appeared: against whom, because Sir Thomas More while he was Lord Chancellor, at the suit of one Vaughan, his adversary, had made a decree. This Parnell to his Highness most grievously complained that Sir Thomas More, for making the same decree, had of the same Vaughan—unable for the gout to travel abroad himself—by the hands of his wife taken a fair gilt cup for a bribe.

Who thereupon, by the King's appointment, being called before the whole Council, where the matter was heinously laid to his charge, forthwith confessed, that forasmuch as that cup was long after the foresaid decree brought him for a New Year's gift; he, upon her importunate pressing upon him therefor, of courtesy refused not to receive it.

Then the Lord Wiltshire—for hatred of his religion, preferer of this suit—with much rejoicing said unto the Lords: "Lo, did I not tell you, my Lords, that you should find this matter true?" Whereupon Sir Thomas More desired their Lordships that as they had courteously heard him tell the one part of his tale, so they would vouchsafe of their honours indifferently to hear the other.

After which obtained, he further declared unto them, that albeit indeed he had with much work received that cup; yet immediately thereupon he caused his butler to fill it with wine, and of that cup drank to her. And that when he had so done, and she pledged him, then as freely as her husband had given it

to him, even so freely gave he the same unto her again to give unto her husband for his New Year's gift. Which, at his instant request, though much against her will, at length yet she was fain to receive—as herself, and certain other there, presently before them deposed. Thus was the great mountain turned scant to a little mole-hill.

So I remember that at another time, upon a New Year's day, there came to him one Mistress Crocker, a rich widow—for whom with no small pain he had made a decree in the Chancery against the Lord of Arundel—to present him with a pair of gloves and forty pounds in angels in them, for a New Year's gift. Of whom he thankfully receiving the gloves but refusing the money, said unto her: "Mistress, since it were against good manners to forsake a gentlewoman's New Year's gift, I am content to take your gloves, but as for your money, I utterly refuse." So, much against her mind, enforced he her to take her gold again.

And one Master Gresham likewise, having at the same time a cause depending in the Chancery before him, sent him for a New Year's gift of a fair gilted cup, the fashion whereof he well liking, caused one of his own—though not in his fantasy of so good a fashion, yet better in value—to be brought him out of his chamber, which he willed the messenger in recompense, to deliver to his master; and under other condition would he in no wise receive it.

Many things more of like effect, for the declaration of his innocency and clearness from all corruption or evil affection could I here rehearse besides; which for tediousness omitting, I refer to the readers by these few before-remembered examples, with their own judgments wisely to weigh and consider the same.

III

At the Parliament following was there put into the Lord's house a bill to attain the nun and divers other religious persons of high treason, and the Bishop of Rochester, Sir Thomas More, and certain others, of misprision of treason,—the King presupposing of likelihood that this bill would be to Sir Thomas More so troublous and terrible that it would force him to relent and condescend to his request; wherein his Grace was much deceived. To which bill Sir Thomas More was a suitor personally to be received, in his own defense to make answer. But the King not liking that, assigned the Bishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, and Master Cromwell, at a day and place appointed, to call Sir Thomas More before them. At which time I, thinking I had a good opportunity, earnestly advised him to labour unto those Lords for the help of his discharge out of that Parliament bill. Who answered me he would.

At his coming before them according to their appointment, they entertained him very friendly, willing him to sit down with them; which in no wise he would. Then began the Lord Chancellor to declare unto him how many ways the King had showed his love and favour towards him; how fain he would have had him continue in his office; how glad he would have been to have heaped more benefits upon him; and finally how he could ask no worldly honour nor profit at his Highness' hands that were likely to be denied him—hoping by the declaration of the King's kindness and affection towards him, to provoke him to recompense his Grace with the like again; and unto those things that the Parliament, the Bishops, and the Universities had already passed, to add his consent.

To this Sir Thomas More mildly made answer, saying, "No

man living is there, my Lords, that would with better will do the thing that should be acceptable to the King's Highness than I; which must needs confess his manifold goodness and bountiful benefits, most benignly bestowed on me. Howbeit, I verily hoped that I should never have heard of this matter more, considering that I have from time to time always—from the beginning, so plainly and truly declared my mind unto his Grace—which his Highness to me ever seemed, like a most gracious prince, very well to accept; never minding, as he said, to molest me more therewith. Since which time any further thing that was able to move me to any change, could I never find; and if I could, there is none in all the world that would have been gladder of it than I."

Many things more were there of like sort uttered on both sides. But in the end, when they saw they could by no manner of persuasions remove him from his former determination, then began they more terribly to touch him,—telling him that the King's Highness had given them in commandment, if they could by no gentleness win him, in *his* name with his great ingratitude to charge him *That never was there servant to his sovereign so villainous, nor subject to his prince, so traitorous as he!* For he, by his subtle, sinister sleights most unnaturally procuring and provoking him to set forth a book of *The Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* (and maintenance of the Pope's authority) had caused him—to his dishonour throughout all Christendom—to put a sword into the Pope's hands to fight against himself.

When they had thus laid forth all the terrors they could imagine against him: "My Lords," quoth he, "these terrors be arguments for children and not for me! But to answer that wherewith you do chiefly burden me, I believe the King's

Highness of his honour will never lay that to my charge. For none is there that can in that point say in my excuse more than his Highness himself,—who *right well knoweth* that I never was procurer nor counsellor of his Majesty thereunto; but after it was finished, by his Grace's appointment and consent of the makers of the same, only a sorter-out and placer of the principal matters therein contained. Wherein when I found the Pope's authority highly advanced, and with strong arguments mightily defended, I said unto his Grace: 'I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing; and that is this: The Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with all other Christian princes. It may hereafter so fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some points of the league; whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best therefore that that place be amended, and his authority more slenderly touched.'

"'Nay,' quoth his Grace, 'that shall it not. We are so much bounden unto the See of Rome, that we cannot do too much honour unto it!'

"Then did I further put him in remembrance of the Statute of Praemunire, whereby a good part of the Pope's pastoral cure here was pared away.

"To that answered his Highness: 'Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost. For we received from that See our crown imperial'—which till his Grace with his own mouth told it me, I never heard of before. So that I trust when his Grace shall be once truly informed of this, and call to his gracious remembrance my doing in that behalf, his Highness will never speak of it more; but clear me thoroughly therein himself."

And thus displeasantly departed they.

Then took Sir Thomas More his boat towards his house at Chelsea, wherein by the way he was very merry. And for *that* was I nothing sorry, hoping that he had got himself discharged out of the Parliament bill. When he was landed and come home, then walked we twain alone into his garden together; where I, desirous to know how he had sped, said, "I trust Sir, that all is well, because you be so merry."

"It is so, indeed, Son Roper, I thank God," quoth he.

"Are you then put out of the Parliament bill?" said I.

"By my troth, Son Roper," quoth he, "I never remembered it."

"Never remembered it, Sir?" said I,—*"a case that toucheth yourself so near, and us all for your sake! I am sorry to hear it; for I verily trusted when I saw you so merry, that all had been well."*

Then said he, "Wilt thou know, Son Roper, why I was so merry?"

"That would I gladly, Sir," quoth I.

"In good faith, I rejoiced, Son," quoth he, "that I had given the devil a foul fall; and that with those Lords I had gone so far as, without great shame, I could never go back again."

At which words waxed I very sad; for though himself liked it well, yet liked it me but a little.

Now upon the report made by the Lord Chancellor and the other Lords to the King of all their whole discourse had with Sir Thomas More, the King was so highly offended with him that he plainly told them he was fully determined that the

aforesaid Parliament bill should undoubtedly proceed forth against him. To whom the Lord Chancellor and the rest of the Lords said that they perceived the Lords of the upper house so precisely bent to hear him in his own defense make answer himself, that if he were not put out of the bill, it would without fail be utterly an overthrow of all. But for all this, needs would the King have his own will therein; or else he said that at the passing thereof, he would be personally present himself.

Then the Lord Audeley and the rest seeing him so vehemently set thereupon, on their knees most humbly besought his Grace to forbear the same, considering that if he should in his own presence receive an overthrow, it would not only encourage his subjects ever after to contemn him, but also throughout all Christendom redound to his dishonour for ever; adding thereunto that they mistrusted not in time against him to find some meeter matter to serve his turn better. For in this case of the nun, he was accounted, they said, so innocent and clear that for his dealing therein, men reckoned him far worthier of praise than reproof. Whereupon at length, through their earnest persuasion, he was content to condescend to their petition.

And on the morrow after, Master Cromwell meeting me in the Parliament House, willed me to tell my father that he was put out of the Parliament bill. But because I had appointed to dine that day in London, I sent the message by my servant to my wife to Chelsea. Whereof when she informed her father, "In faith, Meg," quoth he, "*Quod differtur non aufertur.*"

After this, as the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Thomas More chanced to fall in familiar talk together, the Duke said unto him: "By the mass, Master More, it is perilous, striving with

princes. And therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure. For by God's body, Master More, *Indignatio principis mors est!*"

"Is that all, my Lord?" quoth he. "Then in good faith is there no more difference between your Grace and me, but that I shall die today, and you tomorrow."

So it fell out, within a month or thereabouts, after the making of the Statute for the Oath of the Supremacy and Matrimony, that all the priests of London and Westminster, and no temporal men but he, were sent for to appear at Lambeth before the Bishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and Secretary Cromwell—commissioners appointed there to tender the oath unto them. Then Sir Thomas More, as his accustomed manner was always ere he entered into any matter of importance—as when he was first chosen of the King's Privy Council; when he was sent ambassador, appointed Speaker of the Parliament, made Lord Chancellor, or when he took any like weighty matter upon him—to go to church and be confessed, to hear mass and be houseled; so did he likewise in the morning early the self-same day that he was summoned to appear before the Lords at Lambeth.

And whereas he evermore used before, at his departure from his wife and children, whom he tenderly loved, to have them bring him to his boat, and there to kiss them all, and bid them farewell; *then* would he suffer none of them forth of the gate to follow him, but pulled the wicket after him and shut them all from him,—and with an heavy heart, as by his countenance it appeared, with me and our four servants there took he his boat towards Lambeth. Wherein sitting still sadly awhile, at the last he suddenly rownded me in the ear and said, "Son Roper, I thank our Lord the field is won!"

What he meant thereby I then wist not, yet loath to seem ignorant, I answered, "Sir, I am thereof very glad." But as I conjectured afterwards, it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually, that it conquered all his carnal affections utterly.

VIII

The Tower of London: 1534

Now at his coming to Lambeth, how wisely he behaved himself before the commissioners at the ministration of the oath unto him may be found in certain letters of his sent to my wife, remaining in a great book of his works. Where by the space of four days he was betaken to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster, during which time the King consulted with his Council what order were meet to be taken with him. And albeit in the beginning they were resolved that with an oath, not to be acknowen, whether he had to the Supremacy been sworn, or what he thought thereof, he should be discharged; yet did Queen Anne by her importunate clamour, so sore exasperate the King against him, that contrary to his former resolution, he caused the said Oath of the Supremacy to be ministered unto him. Who, albeit he made a discreet, qualified answer, nevertheless was forthwith committed to the Tower.

Whom, as he was going thitherward, wearing as he commonly did, a chain of gold about his neck, Sir Richard Cromwell, that had the charge of his conveyance thither, advised him to send home his chain to his wife or to some of his children. "Nay, Sir," quoth he, "that I will not. For if I were taken in the field by my enemies, I would they should somewhat fare the better by me." At whose landing, Master Lieutenant at the Tower-gate was ready to receive him, where the porter demanded of him his upper garment.

"Master Porter," quoth he, "here it is"—and took off his

cap and delivered it him, saying, "I am very sorry it is no better for you."

"No, Sir," quoth the porter, "I must have your gown."

And so was he by Master Lieutenant conveyed to his lodging, where he called unto him one John a Wood, his own servant, there appointed to attend upon him, who could neither write nor read; and sware him before the Lieutenant that if he should hear or see him at any time speak or write any manner of thing against the King, the Council, or the state of the Realm, he should open it to the Lieutenant, that the Lieutenant might incontinent reveal it to the Council.

Now when he had remained in the Tower a little more than a month, my wife longing to see her father, by her earnest suit at length got leave to go to him. At whose coming, after the Seven Psalms and Litany said—which, whensoever she came to him, ere he fell in talk of any worldly matters, he used accustomably to say with her—among other communication he said unto her:

"I believe, Meg, that they that have put me here, ween they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure thee on my faith, my own good Daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I account the chief part of my charge, I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as strait a room—and straiter, too. But since I am come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my lack among you.

"I find no cause, I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case here than in my own house. For methinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me." Thus by his gracious demeanor in tribulation appeared

it that all the troubles that ever chanced unto him, by his patient sufferance thereof, were to him no painful punishments, but of his patience profitable exercises.

And at another time, when he had first questioned with my wife a while of the order of his wife, children, and state of his house in his absence, he asked her how Queen Anne did.

"In faith, Father," quoth she, "never better."

"Never better, Meg!" quoth he, "Alas! Meg, alas! it pitieth me to remember into what misery, poor soul, she shall shortly come!"

After this, Master Lieutenant coming into his chamber to visit him, rehearsed the benefits and friendship that he had many ways received at his hands, and how much bounden he was therefore friendly to entertain him, and make him good cheer. Which, since the case standing as it did he could not do without the King's indignation, he trusted, he said, he would accept his good-will, and such poor cheer as he had.

"Master Lieutenant," quoth he again, "I verily believe, as you may, so you are my good friend indeed; and would, as you say, with your best cheer entertain me—for the which I most heartily thank you. And assure yourself, Master Lieutenant, I do not mislike my cheer; but whensoever I so do, then thrust me out of your doors!"

I

Whereas the oath confirming the Supremacy and Matrimony was by the first statute in few words comprised, the Lord Chancellor and Master Secretary did of their own heads add more words unto it—to make it appear unto the King's ears more pleasant and plausible. And *that* oath, so amplified, caused they to be ministered to Sir Thomas More and to all

other throughout the Realm. Which Sir Thomas More perceiving, said unto my wife, "I may tell thee, Meg, they that have committed me hither for refusing of this oath not agreeable with the statute, are not by their own law able to justify my imprisonment. And surely, Daughter, it is great pity that any Christian prince should by a flexible council, ready to follow his affections, and by a weak clergy, lacking grace constantly to stand to their learning, with flattery [to] be so shamefully abused!" But at length the Lord Chancellor and Master Secretary, espying their own oversight in that behalf, were fain afterwards to find the means that another statute should be made, for the confirmation of the oath so amplified with their additions.

After Sir Thomas More had given over his office and all other worldly doings therewith, to the intent he might from thenceforth more quietly settle himself to the service of God, then made he a conveyance for the disposition of all his lands, reserving to himself an estate thereof only for the term of his own life; and after his decease assuring some part of the same to his wife—some to his son's wife for a jointure, in consideration that she was an inheritress in possession of more than an hundred pounds land by the year,—and some to me and my wife in recompense of our marriage money—with divers remainders over. All which conveyance and assurance was perfectly finished long before that matter whereupon he was attainted was made an offense, and yet after by statute clearly avoided. And so were all his lands that he had to his wife and children by the said conveyance in such sort assured, contrary to the order of law, taken away from them and brought into the King's hands—saving that portion which he had appointed to my wife and me. Which, although he had

in the foresaid conveyance reserved, as he did the rest, for term of life to himself; nevertheless, upon further consideration, two days after, by another conveyance he gave the same immediately to my wife and me in possession. And so because the statute had undone only the first conveyance, giving no more to the King but so much as passed by that, the second conveyance—whereby it was given to my wife and me, being dated two days after—was without the compass of the statute, and so was our portion to us by that means clearly reserved.

As Sir Thomas More in the Tower chanced on a time, looking out of his window, to behold one Master Reynolds—a religious, learned and virtuous father of Sion—and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matters of the Matrimony and Supremacy going out of the Tower to execution; he, as one longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, then standing there besides him:

“Lo! Dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bride-grooms to their marriage? Wherefore, thereby mayest thou see, mine own good Daughter, what a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a strait, hard, penitential, and painful life, religiously; and such as have in the world, like worldly wretches—as thy poor father hath done—consumed all their time in pleasure and ease, licentiously.

“For God, considering their long-continued life in most sore and grievous penance, will no longer suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery and iniquity, but speedily hence taketh them to the fruition of His ever-lasting Diety. Whereas thy silly father, Meg, that like a most wicked caitiff hath passed forth the whole course of his miserable life most sinfully, God, thinking him not worthy so soon to come to

that eternal felicity, leaveth him here yet still in the world—further to be plunged and turmoiled with misery.”

II

Within a while after, Master Secretary coming to him into the Tower from the King pretended much friendship towards him, and for his comfort told him that the King's Highness was his good and gracious Lord, and minded not with any matter (wherein he should have any cause of scruple) from henceforth to trouble his conscience. As soon as Master Secretary was gone to express what comfort he conceived of his words, he wrote with a coal—for ink then had he none—these verses following:

Aye, flattering Fortune, look thou never so fair,
Nor never so pleasantly begin to smile—
As though thou wouldst my ruin all repair—
During my life, thou shalt not me beguile!
Trust I shall God—to enter in a while
His haven of Heaven, sure and uniform:
Ever after thy calm, look I for a storm.

When Sir Thomas More had continued a good while in the Tower, my Lady, his wife, obtained license to see him. Who, at her first coming, like a simple, ignorant woman and somewhat worldly, too, with this manner of salutation bluntly saluted him:

“What the good-year, Master More!” quoth she. “I marvel that you that have been always hitherto taken for so wise a man will now so play the fool,—to lie here in this close, filthy prison and be content thus to be shut up amongst mice and rats, when you might be abroad at your liberty! And with the favour and good-will both of the King and his Council—if

you would but do as all the bishops and best learned of this Realm have done!

"And seeing you have at Chelsea a right fair house—your library, your books, your gallery, your garden, your orchard, and all other necessities so handsome about you; where you might in the company of me, your wife, your children, and household be merry, I muse what a God's name you mean here still thus fondly to tarry!"

After he had a while quietly heard her, with a cheerful countenance he said unto her, "I pray thee, good Mistress Alice, tell me one thing."

"What is that?" quoth she.

"Is not this house," quoth he, "as nigh heaven as my own?"

To whom she, after her accustomed homely fashion, not liking such talk, answered, "Tilly vally, tilly vally!"

"How say you, Mistress Alice," quoth he, "is it not so?"

"Bone Deus, bone Deus, man! Will this gear never be left?" quoth she.

"Well then, Mistress Alice, if it be so," quoth he, "it is very well. For I see no great cause why I should much joy either of my gay house or of anything belonging thereunto; when if I should but seven years lie buried under the ground, and then arise and come thither again, I should not fail to find some therein, that would bid me get me out of doors; and tell me it were none of mine. What cause have I then to like such an house, as would so soon forget his master?"

So her persuasions moved him but a little.

III

Not long after came there to him the Lord Chancellor, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, with Master Secretary and

certain other of the Privy Council, at two several times, by all policies possible procuring him, either precisely to confess the Supremacy, or precisely to deny it; whereunto, as appeareth by his examinations in the said great book, they could never bring him.

Shortly hereupon, Master Rich, afterwards Lord Rich, then newly made the King's solicitor, Sir Richard Southwell, and one Master Palmer, servant to the Secretary, were sent to Sir Thomas More in the Tower to fetch away his books from him. And while Sir Richard Southwell and Master Palmer were busy in the trussing up of his books, Master Rich, pretending friendly talk with him, among other things of a set course, as it seemed, said thus unto him:

"Forasmuch as it is well known, Master More, that you are a man both wise and well-learned, as well in the laws of the Realm as otherwise, I pray you therefore, Sir, let me be so bold as of good-will to put unto you this case. Admit there were, Sir," quoth he, "an act of Parliament that all the Realm should take me for king. Would not you, Master More, take me for king?"

"Yes, Sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "that would I."

"I put case further," quoth Master Rich, "that there were an act of Parliament that all the Realm should take me for pope. Would not you then, Master More, take me for pope?"

"For answer, Sir," quoth Sir Thomas More, "to your first case: The Parliament may well, Master Rich, meddle with the state of temporal princes. But to make answer to your other case, I will put you this case: Suppose the Parliament would make a law that God should not be God. Would you then, Master Rich, say that God were not God?"

"No, Sir," quoth he, "that would I not; sithe no Parliament may make any such law."

"No more," said Sir Thomas More, as Master Rich reported of him, "could the Parliament make the King supreme head of the Church."

Upon whose only report was Sir Thomas More indicted of treason upon the statute whereby it was made treason to deny the King to be supreme head of the Church. Into which indictment were put these heinous words—*'maliciously, traitorously, and diabolically!'*

IV

When Sir Thomas More was brought from the Tower to Westminster Hall to answer the indictment, and at the King's Bench bar before the judges thereupon arraigned, he openly told them that he would upon that indictment have abidden in law, but that he thereby should have been driven to confess of himself the matter indeed, that was the denial of the King's supremacy, which he protested was untrue. Wherefore, he thereto pleaded not guilty; and so reserved unto himself advantage to be taken of the body of the matter, after verdict, to avoid that indictment,—and moreover added, that if those only odious terms, *'maliciously, traitorously, and diabolically'*, were put out of the indictment, he saw therein nothing justly to charge him.

And for proof to the jury that Sir Thomas More was guilty of this treason, Master Rich was called forth to give evidence unto them upon his oath; as he did. Against whom thus sworn, Sir Thomas More began in this wise to say: "If I were a man, my Lords, that did not regard an oath, I needed not, as it is well known, in this place, at this time, nor in this case, to

stand here as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Master Rich, be true, then pray that I never see God in the face—which I would not say, were it otherwise, to win the whole world!”

Then recited he to the Court the discourse of all their communication in the Tower according to the truth, and said, “In good faith, Master Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for my own peril. And you shall understand that neither I, nor no man else to my knowledge, ever took you to be a man of such credit as in any matter of importance, I, or any other, would at any time vouchsafe to communicate with you. And I, as you know, of no small while have been acquainted with you and your conversation, who have known you from your youth hitherto—for we long dwelled both in one parish together where, as yourself can tell (I am sorry you compel me so to say) you were esteemed very light of your tongue, a great dicer, and of no commendable fame. And so in your house at the Temple, where hath been your chief bringing-up, were you likewise accounted.

“Can it therefore seem likely unto your honourable Lordships that I would, in so weighty a cause, so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Master Rich—a man of me always reputed for one of so little truth as your Lordships have heard—so far above my sovereign Lord, the King, or any of his noble councillors, that I would unto him utter the secrets of my conscience touching the King’s Supremacy—the special point and only mark at my hands so long sought for—a thing which I never did, nor never would, after the statute thereof made, reveal either to the King’s Highness himself, or to any of his honourable councillors, as it is not unknown to your Honours, at sundry several times sent from his Grace’s own

person unto the Tower unto me for none other purpose? Can this in your judgments, my Lords, seem likely to be true?

"And yet, if I had so done indeed, my Lords, as Master Rich hath sworn, seeing it was spoken but in familiar secret talk—nothing affirming, and only in putting of cases, without other displeasing circumstances—it cannot justly be taken to be spoken maliciously. And where there is no malice, there can be no offense. And over this I can never think, my Lords, that so many worthy bishops, so many honourable personages, and so many other worshipful, virtuous, wise, and well-learned men as at the making of that law were in the Parliament assembled, ever meant to have any man punished death in whom there could be found no malice,—taking '*malitia*' for '*malevolentia*'.

"For if '*malitia*' be generally taken for '*sin*', no man is there then that can thereof excuse himself: *Quia si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, nosmet ipsos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est.* And only this word '*maliciously*' is in the statute material—as this term '*forcible*' is in the statute of forcible entries. By which statute, if a man enter peaceably, and put not his adversary out forcibly, it is no offense. But if he put him out forcibly, then by that statute it is an offense, and so shall he be punished by this term '*forcibly*'.

"Besides this, the manifold goodness of the King's Highness himself, that hath been so many ways my singular good Lord and gracious Sovereign—that hath so dearly loved and trusted me, even at my very first coming into his noble service with the dignity of his honourable Privy Council vouchsafing to admit me—and to offices of great credit and worship most liberally advanced me; and finally with that weighty room of his Grace's High Chancellor (the like whereof he never did

to temporal man before) next to his own royal person the highest officer in this noble Realm—so far above my merits or qualities able and meet therefor—of his incomparable benignity honoured and exalted me, by the space of twenty years and more showing his continual favour towards me; and (until at my own poor suit, it pleased his Highness, giving me license with his Majesty's favour, to bestow the residue of my life for the provision of my soul in the service of God, of his especial goodness thereof to discharge and unburthen me) most benignly heaped honours continually more and more upon me: all this his Highness' goodness, I say, so long thus bountifully extended towards me, were in my mind, my Lords, matter sufficient to convince this slanderous surmise by this man so wrongfully imagined against me."

Master Rich, seeing himself so disproved and his credit so foully defaced, caused Sir Richard Southwell and Master Palmer—that at the time of their communication were in the chamber—to be sworn what words had passed between them. Whereupon Master Palmer, upon his deposition, said that he was so busy about the trussing up of Sir Thomas More's books in a sack, that he took no heed to their talk. Sir Richard Southwell likewise, upon his deposition, said that because he was appointed only to look unto the conveyance of his books, he gave no ear unto them.

v

After this were there many other reasons, not now in my remembrance, by Sir Thomas More in his own defense alleged, to the discredit of Master Rich's aforesaid evidence and proof of the clearness of his own conscience. All which notwithstanding, the jury found him guilty.

And incontinent upon their verdict, the Lord Chancellor—for that matter chief commissioner—beginning to proceed in judgment against him, Sir Thomas More said to him: “My Lord, when I was toward the law, the manner in such case was to ask the prisoner before judgment, why judgment should not be given against him.” Whereupon, the Lord Chancellor staying his judgment—wherein he had partly proceeded—demanded of him what he was able to say to the contrary. Who then in this sort most humbly made answer:

“Forasmuch as, my Lord,” quoth he, “this indictment is grounded upon an act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and His Holy Church, the supreme government of which, or of any part whereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome—a spiritual pre-eminence by the mouth of Our Saviour himself personally present upon the earth, only to St. Peter and his successors, Bishops of the same See by special prerogative granted; it is therefore in law amongst Christian men, insufficient to charge any Christian man.”

And for proof thereof like as—among divers other reasons and authorities, he declared—that this Realm, being but one member and small part of the Church, might not make a particular law disagreeable with the general law of Christ’s universal Catholic Church,—no more than the City of London, being but one poor member in respect of the whole Realm, might make a law against an act of Parliament to bind the whole Realm. So farther showed he that it was contrary both to the laws and statutes of our own land yet unrepealed—as they might evidently perceive in Magna Charta: *Quod ecclesia Anglicana libera sit, et habeat omnia iura sua integra et liber-*

tates suas illaesas; and also contrary to that sacred oath which the King's Highness himself and every other Christian prince always with great solemnity received at their coronations—alleging moreover, that no more might this Realm of England refuse obedience to the See of Rome than might the child refuse obedience to his own natural father.

For as St. Paul said of the Corinthians, 'I have regenerated you my children in Christ,' so might St. Gregory, Pope of Rome, of whom by St. Augustine, his messenger, we first received the Christian faith, of us Englishmen truly say: 'You are my children because I have given to you everlasting salvation—a far higher and better inheritance than any carnal father can leave to his child—and by regeneration made you my spiritual children in Christ.'

Then was it by the Lord Chancellor thereunto answered that seeing all the bishops, universities, and best learned of this Realm had to this act agreed, it was much marvelled that he alone against them all would so stiffly stick thereat, and so vehemently argue thereagainst. To that Sir Thomas More replied, saying,

"If the number of bishops and universities be so material as your Lordship seemeth to take it, then I see little cause, my Lord, why that thing in my conscience should make any change. For I nothing doubt but that, though not in this Realm, yet in Christendom about, of these well-learned bishops and virtuous men that are yet alive, they be not the fewer part that be of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those which already be dead, of whom many be now holy saints in heaven, I am very sure it is the far greater part of them that, all the while they lived, thought in this case that way that I think now. And therefore am I not bound, my Lord, to

conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the general council of Christendom!"

Now when Sir Thomas More, for the avoiding of the indictment, had taken as many exceptions as he thought meet—and many more reasons than I can now remember, alleged—the Lord Chancellor, loath to have the burthen of that judgment wholly depend upon himself, there openly asked the advice of the Lord Fitz-James, then Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and joined in commission with him, whether this indictment were sufficient or not. Who, like a wise man answered, "My Lords all, by St. Julian,"—that was ever his oath—"I must needs confess that if the act of Parliament be not unlawful, then is not the indictment in my conscience insufficient!"

Whereupon the Lord Chancellor said to the rest of the Lords, "Lo, my Lords, lo, you hear what my Lord Chief Justice saith!" And so immediately gave he judgment against him.

After which ended, the commissioners yet further courteously offered him—if he had anything else to allege for his defense—to grant him favourable audience. Who answered: "More have I not to say, my Lords, but that like as the Blessed Apostle, St. Paul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was present and consented to the death of St. Stephen, and kept their clothes that stoned him to death,—and yet be they now, both twain, holy saints in heaven and shall continue there friends for ever—so I verily trust, and shall therefor right heartily pray, that though your Lordships have now here in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in heaven merrily all meet together, to our everlasting salvation!"

Thus much touching Sir Thomas More's arraignment—being not thereat present myself—have I by the credible report, partly of the right worshipful Sir Anthony St. Leger, knight, and partly of Richard Heywood and John Webbe, gentlemen, with others of good credit, at the hearing thereof present themselves, as far as my poor wit and memory would serve me, here truly rehearsed unto you.

IX

Saint Thomas' Even

Now after this arraignment, departed he from the Bar to the Tower again, led by Sir William Kingston—a tall, strong, and comely knight—Constable of the Tower, and his very dear friend. Who, when he had brought him from Westminster to the Old Swan towards the Tower, there with an heavy heart, the tears running down by his cheeks, bade him farewell. Sir Thomas More seeing him so sorrowful, comforted him with as good words as he could, saying, "Good Master Kingston, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer; for I will pray for you, and my good Lady, your wife, that we may meet in heaven together where we shall be merry for ever and ever."

Soon after, Sir William Kingston talking with me of Sir Thomas More, said, "In good faith, Master Roper, I was ashamed of myself that at my departing from your father I found my heart so feeble and his so strong—that he was fain to comfort me, which should rather have comforted him."

When Sir Thomas More came from Westminster to the Tower-ward again, his daughter, my wife, desirous to see her father, whom she thought she should never see in this world after—and also to have his final blessing—gave attendance about the Tower Wharf where she knew he should pass by before he could enter into the Tower; there tarrying for his coming home.

As soon as she saw him—after his blessing on her knees reverently received—she hasting towards him and without

consideration or care of herself, pressing in among the midst of the throng and company of the guard, that with halberds and bills went round about him, hastily ran to him, and there, openly, in the sight of them all, embraced him, took him about the neck, and kissed him. Who, well liking her most natural and dear daughterly affection towards him, gave her his fatherly blessing and many goodly words of comfort besides.

From whom after she was departed, she—not satisfied with the former sight of him, and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her dear father, having respect neither to herself nor to the press of the people and multitude that were there about him—suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck and divers times together most lovingly kissed him; and at last, with a full heavy heart was fain to depart from him. The beholding whereof was to many of them that were present thereat, so lamentable that it made them for very sorrow thereof to mourn and weep.

So remained Sir Thomas More in the Tower more than a seven-night after his judgment. From whence, the day before he suffered, he sent his shirt of hair—not willing to have it seen—to my wife, his dearly beloved daughter; and a letter written with a coal contained in the foresaid book of his works, plainly expressing the fervent desire he had to suffer on the morrow in these words following:

“I cumber you, good Margaret, much; but I would be sorry if it should be any longer than tomorrow. For tomorrow is St. Thomas’ Even and the Utas of St. Peter; and therefore tomorrow long I to go to God. It were a day very meet and convenient for me . . .

I never liked your manner towards me better than when you

kissed me last, for I like when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy . . .”

And so upon the next morrow, being Tuesday, St. Thomas’ Even and the Utas of St. Peter, in the year of Our Lord one thousand five hundred thirty and five, according as he in his letter the day before had wished, early in the morning came to him Sir Thomas Pope, his singular friend, on message from the King and his Council that he should before nine of the clock the same morning suffer death; and that therefore, forthwith, he should prepare himself thereunto.

“Master Pope,” quoth he, “for your good tidings I most heartily thank you. I have been always much bounden to the King’s Highness for the benefits and honours that he hath still, from time to time, most bountifully heaped upon me. And yet more bound am I to his Grace for putting me into this place where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of my end. And so help me God, most of all, Master Pope, am I bound to his Highness that it pleaseth him so shortly to rid me out of the miseries of this wretched world. And therefore will I not fail earnestly to pray for his Grace both here and also in another world.”

“The King’s pleasure is further,” quoth Master Pope, “that at your execution you shall not use many words.”

“Master Pope,” quoth he, “you do well to give me warning of his Grace’s pleasure. For otherwise, I had purposed at that time somewhat to have spoken; but of no matter wherewith his Grace or any other should have had cause to be offended. Nevertheless, whatsoever I intended, I am ready obediently to conform myself to his Grace’s commandments. And I beseech you, good Master Pope, to be a mean unto his Highness that my daughter Margaret may be at my burial.”

"The King is content already," quoth Master Pope, "that your wife, children, and other your friends shall have liberty to be present thereat."

"O how much beholden, then," said Sir Thomas More, "am I to his Grace, that unto my poor burial vouchsafeth to have so gracious consideration!"

Wherewithal Master Pope taking his leave of him could not refrain from weeping. Which Sir Thomas More perceiving, comforted him in this wise: "Quiet yourself, good Master Pope, and be not discomfited; for I trust that we shall, once in heaven, see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together in joyful bliss eternally!"

Upon whose departure, Sir Thomas More as one that had been invited to some solemn feast, changed himself into his best apparel; which Master Lieutenant espying advised him to put it off, saying that he that should have it was but a javel.

"What, Master Lieutenant," quoth he, "shall I account him a javel that shall do me this day so singular a benefit? Nay, I assure you were it cloth of gold, I would account it well bestowed on him, as St. Cyprian did, who gave his executioner thirty pieces of gold!" And albeit at length, through Master Lieutenant's importunate persuasion he altered his apparel, yet after the example of that holy martyr, St. Cyprian, did he of that little money that was left him, send one angel of gold to his executioner.

And so was he by Master Lieutenant brought out of the Tower and from thence led towards the place of execution. Where going up the scaffold, which was so weak that it was ready to fall, he said merrily to Master Lieutenant, "I pray you Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself."

Then desired he all the people thereabout to pray for him, and to bear witness with him that he should now there suffer death in and for the faith of the Holy Catholic Church. Which done, he kneeled down and after his prayers said, turned to the executioner, and with a cheerful countenance spake thus to him: "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office. My neck is very short; take heed therefore thou strike not awry, for saving of thine honesty."

So passed Sir Thomas More out of this world to God, upon the very same day in which himself had most desired.

A VALEDICTION

Soon after whose death came intelligence thereof to the Emperor Charles. Whereupon he sent for Sir Thomas Elyot, our English Ambassador, and said unto him: "My Lord Ambassador, we understand that the King, your master, hath put his faithful servant, and grave, wise counsellor, Sir Thomas More, to death." Whereunto Sir Thomas Elyot answered that he understood nothing thereof.

"Well," said the Emperor, "it is too true. And this will we say, that if we had been master of such a servant, of whose doings ourself have had these many years no small experience, we would rather have lost the best city of our dominions than have lost such a worthy counsellor!" Which matter was by the same Sir Thomas Elyot to myself, to my wife, to Master Clement and his wife, to Master John Heywood and his wife, and unto divers other his friends accordingly reported.

FINIS :

DEO GRATIAS .

ROPER'S "MORE"

This intimate and prophetic Memoir has been issued under many titles—but none so inevitably right as this which custom alone has established, without any documentary sanction at all: '*Roper's More*'.¹ For this was the More Roper remembered; and this was the More he most wanted to be remembered. What title he himself gave his Memoir (if indeed he gave it any) is not known. But his intention is unmistakably clear. Of all the qualities his father-in-law possessed, Roper chose to memorialize only his *goodness*—the essential saintliness of his disposition.

Four hundred years after Sir 'Thomas' death, the Church confirmed the rightness of Roper's judgment: the figure who was canonized in 1935 was Roper's More.

This was not the More who made the most powerful appeal to the world Roper was addressing. The biographer was writing on the eve of the Elizabethan age—writing, that is, to a world with a rare taste for a life like Thomas More's—for the variety of his interests and actions, for the mere vicissitudes of his public service—even for the sudden splendor of his fall. It was an auspicious attitude—one destined to produce the long pageant of Shakespearean kings, and to find fulfillment in some of the noblest tragedy ever written. But it was not Roper's. He himself had appointed Nicholas Harpsfield to write the official biography, which presumably would tell the world what it wanted to know.² There one might read what

measure Colet and Erasmus took of More's learning, what figure he cut with Luther and the bishops, what two kings and Wolsey remembered of him as parliamentarian. But the Roper of the Memoir is neither scholar, theologian, nor statesman. He never pretends to judge his father-in-law's greatness—much less to question in any point the veneration the world paid him. All that he simply takes for granted.³

What *he* comes forward to attest is the 'cleere vnsported consciens' of the man: not what he did, but what he *was*.

The world Sir Thomas lived in would not soon forget the last dramatic image of his imprisonment and death; nor would it fail to pay the honor that men of the Renaissance especially paid to a magnificent gesture of the human spirit.⁴ But Roper knew that More's life, and More's death, were not most magnificent in quite this way. *He* knew that the virtue which fulfilled itself on 'St. Thomas' even' was born of no sudden or violent determination. To Roper it was the merest revealing of a quiet essence of which he had been aware all his life—had seen so constantly implied in all his father's action, that like his greatness he had taken this for granted, too.

It was a quality as easy for Roper to take for granted as for the world utterly to miss: a modest, quiet, familiar quality, more evident in a chance remark over the supper table in the bosom of the family, than at Westminster or Oxford. Most purely expressed, it was a *manner*—a way of saying and doing things, which more truly communicated itself to Roper in the over-tones of a walk along the quiet river at Chelsea than in the pages of the celebrated *Utopia*.⁵ But it was always *there*—essential to the man's character, and indeed, giving the highly individual flavor to his demeanor and wit which others relished as subtly 'characteristic.'

It was not Roper's singular discovery; but now, a generation after More's death, he alone of all living men is best able to illustrate and define it. Unless he speaks, the realest meaning of Sir Thomas More will be lost for ever. And therefore, unequal as are his powers to the duty he must perform, 'yeat to thentent the same should not all vtterley perishe,' perform it he will—'knowing at this daye no one man livinge that of him and of his doings understood so much as my self.'⁶

I

Nothing in Roper's book does him greater credit than his exquisite tact in conveying this insubstantial theme. The world he was addressing—like our own—was only too ready to read into a career like More's an example of the great medieval theme, *Contemptus Mundi*: to find in More's martyrdom a disparagement of merely human values. It is a point of view which generally dominates the Saint's Legend, and exalts the saint to the detriment of the living man. And yet, no perceptive interpretation of Thomas More could minimize his delight in the world; he had a genius for enjoying it. His wit was irrepressible whether in the company of wise men or fools; he had a unique talent for fatherhood; and he loved Chelsea down to the very roots of her trees. To be sure, when forced to choose, he did not choose these: there was one thing better. But the point is, there was *only* one. Therefore he had no cause to lament, as did his great contemporary: 'If I had serued God as diligentlie as I have doone the king, he would not haue giuen me ouer in my greie haire.'⁷ More's tragedy was not Wolsey's. But to insist on his asceticism—to ignore his buoyant humanity—would be to deny the nature of *his*

tragedy too! Roper chose not to insist at all. He merely implied, and implied in a very special way.

More's was a personality that bred anecdotes as Lincoln's did—possibly because both men liked to speak in parable themselves. And Roper correctly decided to reveal his father-in-law in this homely biographical mode: that is, merely to tell stories about him, and let the man himself emerge. But episodes of the kind which to Roper conveyed the exact flavor of More's reality were neither numerous nor widely known. They were 'family' stories. Their dearth and homeliness, however, were no embarrassment. On the contrary, rarity added a preciousness to the truth they carried. For in their evanescent forms, only shaped to final form after many communal retellings, lived the man they knew better than any one else ever knew him. 'So let them reverently be told once more,' the biography seems to say, 'let them be told with not one little circumstance omitted, just as we used to tell them.' Later historians, with different aims, have rejected many as insignificant. But their significance for Roper is only that the family remembered that they happened so; and that the memory of them had the power so inevitably to evoke for them, the man he is commemorating.

For example:

And albeit outwardly he appeared honorable [i.e. well-dressed] like one of his callinge, yea inwardly he no such vanities esteeming, secretly next his body ware a shirte of heare; which my sister, a yong gentlewoman, in the sommer, as he sate at supper, singly in his doublet and hose, wearing thervpon a plaine shirte, without ruffe or coller, chauncing to spye, began to laughe at it. My wife, not ignorant of his manner, perceyuinge the same, pryvily told him of it; And he, beinge sory that she sawe it, presently amended it. . . .⁸

The day before he suffred, he sent his shirte of heare (not willing to haue it seen) to my wife, his deerely beloved daughter.⁹

Again and again the biography says, 'I remember: it happened just so. Now it all comes back. It was a summer evening; we were all together then. . . Now he is dead.'

Not precisely the episode as it occurred, but the memory of it that survived in the family circle—this was the story Roper had to tell. He himself had lived in More's household for sixteen years,¹⁰ enjoying for that time the prerogative of an eldest son. He now knows that those years—especially the years at Chelsea—were the happiest of his life; and partly for this reason, he cannot as biographer dissociate the memory of his father-in-law from the memory of Chelsea in the time of their prosperity. It is *there* that More is realest to him.

To be sure, twenty years had taken their toll of recollections; still, many remained, and age had made clear a significance in them which youth had not understood. It had given an inkling, at least, of that elusive melancholy, of the gentle wistfulness, that played over his father's spirit even in the flush of his prosperity. As 'Old Mr. Roper'¹¹ now evokes the image of 'Sonne Roper', he feels a kinship with the older view. He can see all his brothers and sisters—himself like them—all back there at Chelsea again—all young, all sanguine, all assuming in the optimism of youth that the quiet charm of the great estate is the very temper of life itself; and if ever things were to change, they would change as they always had, for the better. He now knows, what Sir Thomas then understood so well¹²—and they never suspected—how utterly mutable was the whole human world that surrounded their pleasant garden. If remoteness of time had blurred the image of some things, it had corrected the memory of others to More's older vision.

Roper's style imparts this mature perspective: this tone of pensive remoteness from the episodes of his story. Of course, it was a fact; he was at great distance from the events he is relating. For one thing, he was no longer 'Sonne Roper.' When he sat down to write, the More and the Chelsea he once knew had been gone more than twenty years. His wife had been dead over ten, and almost every other human tie that bound him to the past had gone the way of time,—not least in importance the youthfulness that experienced it.¹³ He was older than the man he remembered as a father. But remembering *that* makes one thing clear: the memory of that man is the most important of his possessions. Nothing he has ever done—nothing he ever will do—can be so great as this simple truth: he knew Sir Thomas More. That alone gives his life what significance it has.

An old man's memory may be allowed to gild the happiest years of his youth with a luminosity which in sober truth they may never have possessed. Roper does not inhibit the tendency. He embraces it—makes it a fact of his art. For he now believes that the very presence of his beloved father on this earth had somehow touched the most commonplace things with its strange beauty. To communicate just *that*: the sense he has of a flow from that spirit of a miraculous energy, striking orchard and river—even the very air of summer with hues of distant and legendary brightness; *this* is his book—so far as we know, the only one he ever wrote.

II

The essential requirement of such a book is a sustained consistency of tone. And Roper achieves it in the most pervasive of

all the materials of his art—in the very rhythm of the prose in which the book is written.

His prose has the truest style a narrator can aim for—the style of a man talking; and in this case, of a man *seeming to remember* as he talks; and yet again, remembering as *he talks about him*, the greatest man he ever knew. In other words, Roper's is an *oral* style, at once familiar and reverential. It constantly sustains the exact attitude of the author to his subject; and its tone, which honestly implies the familiarity and reverence with which he regarded his father-in-law, is imparted to the style of his work generally: to the homely music of its phrases, to the leisurely repose of Chelsea, and to the feeling of solemnity that emanates from the great central figure himself. It is a minute detail, perhaps, the movement of a sentence—as minute as the brush-stroke of a painter. But it is a fact implicit in every aspect of the work. It is important, therefore, that the reader who would truly appreciate Roper's *More* should savor the exquisite quality of Roper's prose.

Its character is not always most faithfully represented in the purple patches exhibited by the anthologists. The pathetic tableau of Margaret's farewell to her father as he passed from Westminster to the Tower is deservedly classic.¹⁴ So is the staccato dialogue between Dame Alice and her husband in prison—so garrulous as to be almost funny, until the soft lightning of More's irony illumines it with terror.¹⁵ One might add More's epigram for the bishops, and others. Roper is a good dramatist: when his people talk they talk like themselves, and not like him. His *own* style, however, is undramatic, unadorned—not at all like the selections usually chosen to illustrate his book. The example which follows presents no very dramatic substance—one commendable editor omits it; yet in its manner is the essence

of Roper's style. "It reads as if he spoke himself,"¹⁶ and whoever will read it aloud—slowly—or better, hear it read aloud, will hear in its rhythms an echo of the whole sweet gravity of Roper's book.¹⁷

In the tyme somewhat before his trouble
he wold talke with his wife and children
of the joyes of heuen / and the paynes of hell

of the lyves of holy martires
of their greiuous martirdoms / of their marvelous patiens
and of their passions and deathes / that they suffred
rather then they wold offend God

And what an happie and blessed thinge it was
for the love of God to suffer losse of goods
Imprisonement / loss of lands and life also.

He wold further say unto them / that vppon his faith
if he might perceyve his wife and children
wold incourage him to dye in a good cause
it should so comforte him / that for very ioy thereof
it wold make him merelye / runne to deathe

He shewed them afore / what trouble might fall vnto him

Wherewith / and the like vertuous talke
he had so longe before his trouble incouraged them
that when he after fell into the trouble indeede
his trouble to them was a great deale the lesse:

Quia spicula preuisa / minus laedunt.

It cannot be claimed for Roper that this style is consistently even. English prose was in its infancy, and there were few ap-

proved models to steady his taste. Englishmen still apologized for stooping to write English, and even when they did so, wrote with Latin cadences ringing in their ears. And so, Roper. There are occasions when he purposely inverts 'folk' structure to impart a flavor of Latinity to his rhetoric. His idea of More's petition to the King¹⁸ imitates an early notion of 'high style',¹⁹ a style so inverted and elaborate as to be, in effect, Latin in English. Such prose may be expected in prefatory announcements, or whenever great men or great matters are to be heralded upon his stage. But as mere 'Old Mr. Roper,' recollecting 'Sonne Roper' as he watched Henry VIII, come unexpectedly to dine with Sir Thomas at Chelsea, 'in a fair garden of his' where the King 'walked with him by the space of an houre, holding his arm aboute his necke'—here his utterance is inseparable from the circumstantial memory that prompts it. His world is before you.²⁰

From this illusion, then—perhaps from this *fact*—of a man forcing his memory to the utmost, and seeming to speak his recollections just as naturally as they come up to the surface—delivering them often with undue concern for circumstance, and apparent disregard of form—in this complex, the character of the prose is established, and with it the character of Roper's *More*. His memory is, of course, limited, and it is sometimes faulty; so occasionally is his chronology.²¹ But these aberrations do not distort the truth that Roper is telling. He is not writing chronicle history; nor is he writing biography in our sense. His book does not pretend to show us a character shaped by its contact with men and crises. The More Roper portrays was a character quite uninfluenced by the great events in which he played his part. And from beginning to end, this apprehension of More's Being never changes:

'It lieth not in my power but that they maye devour me; but God being my good Lord, I will provide that they shall neuer deffloure me!'²²

The character does not develop; it grows in likeness as a painting does—by accretion. The inconsequence of one episode to another, therefore, is no blemish; actually it only contributes to the verisimilitude of the portrait,—an image which enlarges not in size or complexity, but only in clarity and depth.

Now this method—this style—seems to me to achieve the effect of a great dramatic principle—of which Roper very probably had never heard: the unity of time. The work is exactly commensurate with itself. Its author is not endeavoring, as chronicle history used to do, to give the illusion of a whole life in three hours upon the stage. His subject is not More's long career in the world, but the image of his soul. He has told everything he can remember that will mirror it—told it without embellishment, without analysis. There is no more to say; the story achieves its own perfect unity of time—the time it takes to tell it.

III

Even more insistent is Roper's concern for a unity of *place*. Therefore, the setting of his Memoir is not the wide world of the Renaissance, where Sir Thomas played as conspicuous a part as any Englishman of his time, but Chelsea, More's country-seat on the Thames. This choice of Roper's, at first surprising, becomes, in view of his purpose, intuitively right. For his father-in-law loved Chelsea with a passion that jaundiced all the honors that kept him away from it so much. As a young lawyer he had bought some land near the pleasant village, then about ten miles up the river from London; and as prosperity

warranted, he added other lands and buildings to his estate. Roper could remember Chelsea in its flower—when More seems to have kept not merely a country-place, but an academy and a village as well.

Chelsea was known all over the world. Erasmus had heard so much about it he could imagine it from hear-say.²³ Holbein had painted the family portraits there. And they all seem to see it through the eyes of More's affection as a kind of Earthly Paradise of blue and silver mornings. Chelsea is an atmosphere, a state of mind, whose source was the Master of Chelsea himself. For him, especially, it was a place of many voices. Rosemary ran in profusion over the very paths he walked on. He had planted it himself when he first took possession; and he liked to see it spread over his garden walks, 'not onlie because his bees loved it, but because 't is the herb sacred to Remembrance.'²⁴ Then there was the blossoming orchard where the King had walked with him; and the garden gate that gave on the boat-place, where his liveried bargemen waited while the Lord Chancellor took leave of his family.²⁵ And all along the walls of his garden were cages and warrens for animals. 'He keeps all sorts of birds,' says Erasmus; 'with apes, foxes, beavers, weazels, and other rareties.'²³ The monkey sat to Holbein with the rest of the family.

But More's exuberance was not to be bounded by a mere estate. Like his rosemary it ran over the walls. It was felt in the parish church which he had endowed, and where as Lord Chancellor he was once caught singing in the choir (and not singing very well);²⁶ it was felt, too, in the home he had founded for the aged of Chelsea and placed under the special charge of his daughter, Margaret Roper.²⁷ Chelsea was freedom—freedom that released the boundless affection of his nature.

And yet the central focus of that affection was none of these. It was the family: a family no doubt impressive in many subtle ways, but obviously impressive for its size.

To make an approximate enumeration, by no means exhaustive, there was to begin with, Sir John More, Judge of the King's Bench, and father of Sir Thomas. His sanguine old age shines in every line that Holbein drew—and is concealed in every one the old man himself ever wrote. 'Matrimony,' he once observed, 'is like a man who puts his hand into a bag containing twenty snakes and one eel. It is twenty to one he catches the eel.' And thus saying, he married four wives—all excellent women, according to his son.

There was of course, Dame Alice, More's second wife, and Roper's convenient foil to her husband's moderation and unworldliness. *Nec bella nec puella*, More jokingly described her to Erasmus.²⁸ But if she has come down to us singularly unredeemed by the Graces among whom she lived, let us reflect that during More's long absences from home, she ran Chelsea—a household in which she found herself twice a daughter-in-law, four times a step-mother, and five a mother-in-law. It is questionable whether even Chelsea's wide acres provided range enough to relax the total possibility for tension in such a complex. Besides, the lady herself admits a tendency to sharpness. Returning from confession one day, she smiled upon her husband bidding him 'Be merry; for I purpose now to leave off mine old shrewdness [i.e., shrewishness]—and begin even afresh.'²⁹

In the last years of More's life, all his children were married and living at Chelsea: his three daughters and their husbands, his son John and his very young wife, the adopted daughter Margaret Giggs, and eleven grandchildren. Dame Alice's

daughter by her first husband also was brought up in More's household, but appears not to have lived there after her marriage. Naturally, the ramifications of such a family were numerous; but their impulse, however broad, was always centripetal. Whatever they touched, they *involved*. They involved Thomas Colt, the much younger brother of More's first wife, who on his father's death was 'bequeathed' with ten marks to Sir Thomas More until he should come of age. They involved Dr. John Clement, who, arriving as tutor, remained to marry Margaret Giggs; and their daughter subsequently married More's nephew, William Rastell, the editor of his *English Works*. Rastell's sister Joan, who was often at Chelsea, met 'Merrie John' Heywood, the dramatist—one of More's closest younger companions—and, of course, they married. And there were many transients—by Chelsea standards, those who remained only a few years: 'Honest John' Smith, who traveled with Erasmus, but because 'his mamma does not think him safe out of England'³⁰ was sent back, not to her, but to More; John Harris, More's secretary, who married Margaret Roper's companion; Richard Heywood, brother to 'Merrie' John, who reported More's trial to Roper—exceptional in that he was Roper's most intimate friend and yet never married into the family. We must pass by Walter Smyth, Henry Pattison, the fool, and the innumerable servants that went with the Chancellorship and had to be assigned to the garden, the study, the music room, etc., to keep them out of mischief. Surely it was a busy, boisterous, thriving place—and for all that, a little unreal, too.

For the busy Lord Chancellor, Chelsea was sanctuary. He had seriously considered retreat when he was a young man—had, in fact, for four years, without vows, observed the strict rule of the Carthusian Brotherhood. And again near the end

of his life, his thoughts ran to the cloister. The impulse, Roper knew, was constant and deep; and the increasing press of affairs, despite the honors they brought him, tended to strengthen rather than diminish his desire. Chelsea symbolized retreat—a release for the spirit imprisoned in the King's business, into its own affair—the consideration of itself. Hence the symbolic center of all this throbbing scene, for *Roper's More*, at least, is neither garden, nor orchard, nor rosemary walks—nor even the undeniable pull of the family circle. It is the New Building.

'And because he was desirous for godlye purposes sometyme to be solitary, and sequester himself from worldly company, A good distaunce from his mansion house builded he a place called the newe buildinge, wherein there was a Chappell, a library, and a gallery; In which, as his vse was vppon other dayes to occupy himself in prayer and study together, So on the Fridaie, there vsually contynewed he from morning till evening, spending his time only in deuoute praiers and spirituall exercises.'³¹

New Building expressed the whole range of More's humanism, religious and secular. Dame Alice was thinking of it when she called up among the things at Chelsea closest to his heart, 'your library, your bookes, your gallery.'³² New Building expressed the humanistic passion he so diligently strove to inculcate in the whole family: its ancient coins and medallions, its Roman authors set in a new light the remains of a world that had gone; while its treatises on geography and astronomy, its Holbeins and the new Greek Testament of Erasmus faced the dawning of a new world. Roper's intuition of the meaning of New Building was right; Sir Thomas' own words confirm it. Let one 'choose himself some secret solitary place in his own house, as far from noise and company as he conveniently can, and thither let him some time secretly resort alone. . . . There

let him open his heart to God . . . and so dwelling in the faithful trust of God's help, he shall well use his prosperity.'³³

All these impressions lay crowded deep in Roper's mind as he wrote—so deep that they live in his memory not separate and distinct images, but fused into a single sense of place. This is to me best illustrated by an instance he does not record. Sir Thomas had been on a mission to Cambrai for the King. He had returned to England, but was still in conference with the Monarch at Woodstock, when his great barn burned, and with it a neighbor's which had caught fire from the sparks. It was a pretty serious misfortune for all Chelsea. The fall harvest was consumed, and many fields sown to winter grain had been ruined.

Dame Alice was furious, and with some justice blamed the farm-hands. It seemed to her not vengeance but poetic justice that those who had let the barn catch fire should bear the brunt of their carelessness. She therefore prepared to dismiss the laborers; there was no further work to be done that year, and it was their fault there was none. So the poor tenants who knew they faced hunger, now feared they faced unemployment as well. The lamentations in the village rose so high that Giles Heron, husband of More's daughter Cicely, dispatched a letter to Woodstock. Next Sunday it was announced in the parish church that Sir Thomas More had curtailed his conference with the King and got leave to return to Chelsea. In the matter of the fire, no one was to worry. No one would be blamed until he had taken opportunity to investigate for himself. If the ground was indeed ruined, and no labor could be utilized to replant it, let the workers rest assured they would not be turned off until they could find new masters. As for the harvest lost: 'Bid them take no thought therefor; for and I should not leave

myself a spoon, there shall no poor neighbor of mine, bear any loss happened by any chance in my house.

'I pray you, Dame Alice, be with my children and your household merry in God . . . I shall (I think) because of this chance, this next week get leave to come home and see you.'³⁴

And so Chelsea relaxed again, though not yet knowing what he could do. Sufficient unto them that he was coming home, and would receive all their troubles into his own large, coarse, capable hands. There was nothing to worry about any more. . . . And *this* was what Roper felt about More. Whether he was apart in his solitary study in New Building, or ambassador in far Cambrai, Chelsea never ceased to shine without a sense of his nearness. That was why, twenty years after, it returned upon his memory, and the memory of many others who had known it in his day, as a kind of Earthly Paradise where it was always summertime—the bright air trembling on the river.

IV

Thus the personality of Roper's More emerges, in part, as an aspect of special time and place. But most important of all, it is realized as *action*. Roper does not 'describe' his father; he tells what he said and did. And his failure to inform us of More's appearance—especially considering the intimacy of their association—cannot fail to disappoint those readers who are unfamiliar with the conventions of the literary form in which Roper was working. For certainly More's figure was striking enough to invite description. We need no more than Holbein's testimony for that; nor the pen of Erasmus which has set the Holbein portrait in motion.³⁵ He mentions particularly the quick grey eye with flecks in it; the large coarse hands and shambling gait, half scholarly, half rustic—one shoulder higher

than the other. But Erasmus was the pioneer of a new school of biography. Roper was old-fashioned.

But fashion—even old-fashion—is as stern a force in art as in behavior. Roper's generation differed more from Boswell's in what it thought worth recording about a man, than Boswell does from Strachey. Biography as an art distinct from history is a comparatively recent phenomenon. When Roper composed his Memoir, even Plutarch was virtually unknown in England, where the familiar forms of 'life-writing' were either Royal Chronicles or Saints' Lives,—biographies, that is, conceived as functions of national or of ecclesiastical history. Human action was important to such chronicles only in proportion as it affected the history of a nation or of the Church. Since the influence of private individuals on these institutions was generally negligible, the lives, even of such extraordinary men as Sir Thomas More, were, in view of his aims, of little interest to the chronicler.

Indeed, even in the record of kings and saints, because little was known either of their outward appearance or individual nature, little could be reported. The chronicle therefore became, perforce, a record of acts—*Acta Sanctorum*; it told what the subject *did*, not what he was. The individualizing mannerism, its relation to the inner world of personality—this was as yet an undiscovered country whose riches were unsuspected: Holinshed had not written and Shakespeare had not been born. Half a dozen stereotypes served for all the kings that ever lived, and the saints required even fewer. So far as the central requirement of a saint's legend was concerned, it was satisfied by a mere record of the acts sufficient to establish his saintliness. Whatever personal attributes the chronicler might wish to add, however interesting, were quite gratuitous.

This was the tradition Roper inherited, and as a saint's

legend he conceived his *Life of More*. But he had an eye also to royal chronicle. This too was a record of 'acts'; but the acts of a king are more varied than those of a saint, and they are generally recorded with more brilliance and vigor. Indeed whatever its short-comings as portraiture, for mere narrative energy, royal chronicle in the hands of a master is beyond all praise. And the library at Chelsea must have contained a chronicle by such a master. Its subject was King Richard III, and the master none other than the Master of Chelsea himself!³⁶

It is the finest example of its kind in the century. Direct, circumstantial, dramatic, every 'act' operates at full force and strikes a sledge-hammer blow. Here is no dilution of energy for the sake of psychological tone: there was no psychological problem. The great and the trivial lie side by side; for materials were scant enough—so all were included. And even the apparent inconsequence of some episodes seems to have the accidental value of endowing the merest commonplace with a quality of great price—as with something snatched hap-hazardly from the river of time and saved as by a miracle.

Wherupon sone after, that is to wit, on the Friday the—day of—many Lordes assembled in the Tower, and there sat in counsaile, deuising the honorable solempnite of the kings coronacion, of which the time appointed then so nere approched, that the pageauntes and suttelties were in making day and night at Westminster, and much vitaile killed therfore, that afterward was cast away. These lordes so sytting togyther comoning of thys matter, the protectour [later King Richard III] came in among them, fyrst aboute ix. of the clock, saluting them curtesly, and excusyng hymself that had ben from them so long, saieng merely that he had bene a slepe that day. And after a little talking with them he sayd vnto the Bishop of Elye:

"My Lord, you haue very good strawberries at your gardayne

in Holberne; I require you let vs haue a messe of them!"

"Gladly, my Lord," quod he. "Woulde God I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that." And therwith in al the hast he sent hys seruant for a messe of strauberries. The Protectour set the Lordes fast in comoning, and therupon prayeng them to spare hym for a little while departed thence.

And sone, after one hower, betwene .x. and .xi. he returned into the chamber among them, al changed, with a wonderful soure angrye countenance, knitting the browes, frowning and froting and knawing on hys lippes, and so sat him downe in hys place,—al the Lordes much dismaied and sore merueiling of this maner of sodain chaunge, and what thing should him aile. Then when he had sitten still a while, thus he began:

"What were they worthy to haue that compasse and ymagine the distruccion of me, being so nere of blood vnto the King and Protectour of his riall person and this realme?" At this question al the Lordes sat sore astonied, musyng much by whome thys question should be ment, of which euery man wyst himselfe clere. Then the Lord Chamberlen [i.e. Hastings] as he that for the loue betwene them thoughte he might be boldest with him, aunswered and sayd, that thei wer worthye to bee punished as heighnous traitors, whatsoeuer they were. And al the other affirmed the same.

"That is (quod he) yonder sorceres my brothers wife and other with her, (meaning the quene) Ye shal al se in what wise that sorceres and that other witch of her counsel, Shoris wife, with their affynite, haue by their sorcery and witchcraft wasted my body!"

And therwith he plucked vp hys doublet sleue to his elbow vpon his left arme, where he shewed a werish withered arme and small, as it was neuer other. And thereupon euery mannes mind sore mis gave them, well perceiuing that this matter was but a quarel. . . . Natheles the Lorde Chamberlen aunswered and said:

"Certainly my Lord, if they haue so heinously done, thei be worthy heinouse punishment."

"What! (quod the Protectour) Thou seruest me, I wene, with iffes and with andes! I tel the thei haue so done, and that I will make good on thy body traitour!"

And therewith as in a great anger, he clapped his fist vpon the borde a great rappe. At which token giuen, one cried "treason" without the chambre. Therewith a dore clapped, and in come there rushing men in harneys as many as the chambre might hold. And anon the Protectour sayd to the Lorde Hastings, "I arest the, traitour!"

"What, me, my Lorde?"

"Yea, the, traitour," quod the Protectour. And another let flee at the Lorde Standley which shronke at the stroke and fel vnder the table, or els his hed had ben clefte to the tethe; for as shortely as he shranke, yet ranne the blood aboute hys eares. Then were they al quickly bestowed in diuerse chambres, except the Lord Chamberlen, whom the Protectour bade spede and shryue hym apace.

"For by saynt Poule," quod he, "I wil not to dinner til I se thy hed of!" It boted him not to aske why, but heuely he toke a priest at aduenture, and made a short shrift, for a longer would not be suffered, the Protectour made so much hast to dynere; which he might not go to til this were done for sauynge of his othe.

So was he brought forth into the grene beside the chappel within the Tower, and his head laid down vpon a long log of timbre, and there stricken of.

Roper was aware of the virtues of this splendid example of royal chronicle, and also of its single defect. Energy and variety of detail it clearly possessed; but it lacked the cumulative power of total form. The whole was not equal to the sum of its parts. And this need the saint's legend could supply. Deficient by comparison in variety and brightness of episode, it was nevertheless a model of unity; and of unity in the best kind — *action*. However long a saint's legend might be, how-

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ever numerous its episodes, all were subordinated to one great culminating act — the martyrdom. For the stark vigor of its episodic style, Roper's Memoir is indebted to chronicle; but its greatest obligation is to the legend. . . . Beyond all lesser actions lies the last, the final act which they imply — More's execution. That done, there is no more to say. Less than a hundred and fifty words conclude the story; and they suggest not so much a conclusion as an epilogue: the solemn comment of a tragic chorus enlarging the significance of all that has gone before.³⁷

Brief as it is, however, the epilogue offers a very striking confirmation of the structural principle of Roper's book. From the beginning to this final comment, the episodes of More's life have been viewed obliquely — seen, that is, by the observers at Chelsea — not by one who, like Sir Thomas, occupied the center of a larger stage. In the epilogue such a witness is produced. The distinguished statesman, Sir Thomas Elyot breaks in upon the family circle to tell them what character their father bore, not in England only, but in the great theatre of the world. The man whose actions have for so long seemed of principal concern only to his family, now emerges in a universal light, as they hear that what was happening to their father mattered to every single man and woman in all Christendom.

Yet despite the new emphasis, the final episode does not differ from its predecessors in one essential way: it is still reported *as if* from Chelsea. Where the family actually were — what they were doing through the ghastly last hour of More's life, we are never told. But 'soon after' we hear of the impact of that hour on the court of Charles the Fifth;³⁸ not literally, as the Emperor received the news, but again, as the account of

his receiving it returned to Chelsea. It is the same device Roper has used over and over again to fix our point of view toward More. Indeed, it is so consistently applied that I believe myself justified in regarding these 'returns' upon Chelsea as constituting the natural divisions of the Legend, and as far as practicable, have made my chapters conform to them. Especially Roper desired that this final episode should, after the manner of a saint's legend, draw up the separate energies of all others within itself, and by its single impact express the whole life of More. And like the others, its setting, also, should be the family circle—the unity of place that colors his memory, and his book. But the *telling* of this total truth he left, not to the limited chorus at home; this time, it is the English Ambassador who is the reporter, and an emperor who speaks for the kings of Christendom:

'If we had bine maister of such a servante, of whose doings ourselfe haue had these many yeares no small experience, we wold rather haue lost the best city of our dominions than haue lost such a worthy counsellour.' Which matter was by the same Sir Thomas Elliott to my self, to my wife, to maister Clement and his wife, to master John Haywood and his wife, and diuers other his Freinds accordingly reported.²³⁹

In this brief and quiet epitome, time, place and action all converge: Roper's whole book is before you in the instant.

V

This last episode will serve as well as any to raise one final and fundamental consideration.

Readers of footnotes may have discovered²¹—if they were not aware of it already—that this incident is not related with the scrupulous regard for circumstance which Roper's style

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so constantly implies. An artist may prefer Roper's version, but historians will point out — as many have — that although Sir Thomas Elyot may have heard the Emperor express the opinion of More which he subsequently reported to the family, the occasion which prompted the Emperor to speak could not have been More's death, for Elyot was not resident in Charles' court when it occurred! Somewhere history has been tampered with to produce a more satisfying and dramatic climax.

The consequences of Roper's distortion, to be sure, are not grave: the character of More is not in the least falsified — nor is the Emperor's opinion, which is only made more telling. Indeed, it might be sympathetically argued that faced with an inconsistency between the facts of history and the design of his art, the biographer reconciled them brilliantly in the illusion of a higher reality to which both are made contributory. And it might even be more cogently urged that such license in chronology, the extent of which can usually be detected, is as nothing compared with less discernible modifications of motive, of feeling, and the other imponderables of personality which a biographer is constantly required to decide. But it will raise in some minds the question how far this, or indeed any biography which is guilty of such deviation, is to be credited.

The most illuminating opinion I can produce on this whole matter comes not from a biographer but from a novelist. Jean Marie Latour, Willa Cather's archbishop, speaking out of profound emotion, and a newly awakened insight into the character of his life-long friend, says to him, 'I do not see you as you are, Joseph; I see you through my love for you.' Boswell might, with equal candor, have said the same to Johnson — or Roper to More. And they would only have

said, in another way, that the attitude of the biographer — the 'love' in which the subject is mirrored — is not only *an* essential creative principle in the art of biography, but perhaps *its most essential one*. For if biography is finally the creation of one personality by another, then it follows that in reading a Memoir like Roper's, we must always be aware of *both* personalities, and aware also, that both have been shaped in some degree by the creative imagination.

But in Roper's Memoir, especially, the attitude of the biographer is insistent in an extraordinary way. Not only is it frequently stated and implied, it is most constantly *dramatized*. 'Sonne Roper' is quite as much a creature of William Roper's art as either Dame Alice or Daughter Margaret; and in the conduct of the legend, the most important figure after Sir Thomas himself! For 'Sonne Roper' is the personification of that 'love' of which the archbishop speaks — the mirror in which the personality of More is imaged. And the reflection none will deny is arrestingly lucid and beautiful. Perhaps the only dissatisfaction a modern would wish to express is that, considering the complexity of the subject, the image is disarmingly simple.

Indeed there is much the mirror fails to reflect — or at least to reflect emphatically. The tracings of that scintillating wit, which even in Elizabethan days was legendary, appear as by accidental necessity in Sonne Roper's memory; and then of a sombre cast. The son could never have understood the opinion that his father was 'born to make jokes' . . . 'better suited to merriment than to gravity.'⁴⁰ Into More's genial pessimism toward the constancy of Henry VIII, Sonne Roper reads his own youthful humility.⁴¹ In the very episode alleged to confirm the sweetness of More's temper, he quotes him as mentioning 'some of vs, as highe as we seeme to sitt vppon the

mountaynes, treading heretikes vnder our feete like antes.⁴² Luther might have doubted the sweetness; he would not like Sonne Roper have been left undazzled by the fire.

But then, neither are we! For time and time again, Roper's honest, circumstantial reporting rises to confute the generous excesses of his adoration. We listen to him as we listen to the story told by a child, delighting in its unworldliness—in its short-sightedness—yet never doubting the essential veracity of the teller. The view is so single, so unaware of other views, that there is, we feel, no temptation to 'reconcile', to misrepresent. And such narrowness has its reward. A memory so intense and fresh, and so naturally meticulous, seems to have conferred upon many episodes, values for our maturer vision which *Sonne Roper* did not consciously create. Reported as they are by the half-comprehending narrator, they color More's speech and action to dream-like lustre, turning him into the semblance of a mysterious visitant not wholly intelligible in the terms of this world. Thus *Sonne Roper*:

And whereas he evermore vsed before, at his departure from his wife and children, whom he tenderly loved, to haue them bring him to his boate, and there to kisse them all, and bidd them farewell, Then wold he suffer none of them forthe of the gate to followe him, but pulled the wickatt after him, and shutt them all from him; and with an heauy harte, as by his countenaunce it appeared, with me and our foure seruantes there tooke he his boate towards Lambithe. Wherein sitting still sadly awhile, at the last he sodainely rounded me in the yeare, and said: 'Sonne Roper, I thancke our Lord the feild is wonne.' *What he ment thereby I then wist not, yeat loth to seeme ignorant*, I aneswered: 'Sir, I am thereof very glad.'⁴³

Thus *Sonne Roper*: too young, too inexperienced to understand the terrifying implications of More's disclosure. *Sonne*

Roper — but not without an inevitable touch of the inconspicuous biographer to assure us that the teller *remembers* how limited he was! Such is the subtle art of William Roper — *ars celare artem*.

Obviously, then, we must restate our question — must consider not whether William Roper is telling the truth about More, but *what kind of truth* he is telling about him. For he has told a truth no other biographer of More has ever told — or ever will. To do so, he has recreated a youth of naive but incredible memory who recalls his life of sixteen years with Thomas More. The fruit of that experience is an image — an image so simple, so universal as to be all but lost in feeling: the image of the father. Too single for the dramatist, too unrelieved, perhaps, for modern art, it seems to belong in the realm of allegory and saint's legend. Or would, if the character of Sonne Roper were not always there to infuse its ancient form with new life — to personalize its point of view and so inform it with a validity which the anonymous legend of the saint had not possessed.

Yet it is not *solely* the character of Sonne Roper that animates the Memoir, either. The *point of view* itself, though alien to modern art, has its truth, and that truth its power — power to which we still respond when asked to.

But we are not often asked. We sit in the theatre of History having come to see the play, and we can enjoy a tragedy quite as much as a comedy; it is only the power that counts with us. And therefore, if the tragedy is grand enough, grandeur alone redeems the loss that occasioned it. . . . For us. But there is always another audience, though a very small one, for whom this tragedy is but simple sorrow, beyond all power of art to relieve. To that audience Roper belonged. He did not

approach the life of More as one who has found a great subject; he wrote to tell us what only a son can know. And however inadequately he may seem to an outsider to have acquitted himself, he has told what no one else could tell. We may know other things, but we can not know better. Nor will experience of the world, nor the historical point of view equip us to criticize the essential values of his work — values which do not fall within the purviews of such criticism: 'Light that makes things seen, makes some things invisible.' So we must try to see by other lights.

Every one who remembers Woodrow Wilson, friend or foe — and there was little room for others — will recall the peculiar splendor of his battles. Even when he lost a fight, he gained the personal triumph that never deserts a champion; and every one's pulse-beat went up a little when he rode into the lists. But his daughter Eleanor, writing twenty-five years after the event, recalls her feelings on the night of his election with a touch of that awful melancholy with which Sonne Roper watched his father's steps to the chancellorship. Nor is her recollection at all of the triumphant kind which we think we should have felt in her place. Yet who would wish to doubt its validity, its beauty? Indeed, who would dare?

It had been an ominous day for the family, despite every effort to make it otherwise. They had come back to Princeton to await the election returns, and Wilson had whiled away the afternoon revisiting the University grounds. At dinner, according to a rule of long standing, they excluded politics from the conversation; and afterward, while they were still around the table, he read from Browning. . . . Then suddenly, it came. The College bell began to ring wildly, as the distant harmonies of 'Old Nassau' came nearer and louder. The girls ran to an

upper window to watch. And all at once nothing was real. Some one dragged a chair out on the porch. Eleanor noticed it was the broken one. But it was too late:

In all directions, as far as I could see, there were people coming; swarms had already invaded the little garden and were crowded around the porch. . . . And there, sharply silhouetted in the open doorway, a red glare shining full on his face, was father — utterly, utterly unfamiliar.

The crowd, looking up at him, called on him to speak; but he was silent and those few moments, with the restless throng now utterly still and motionless, are *chrySTALLIZED in time for me — sharply separated from all that went before and all that followed.*

I had a sense of awe — almost of terror. He was no longer the man with whom we had lived in warm, sweet intimacy; he was no longer my father. These people — strangers who had chosen him to be their leader — now claimed him. He belonged to them. . . .

And then I heard his voice. Tears of relief welled into my eyes. It was the same voice that had sung "Peri Meri Dictum Domini," in my childhood.⁴⁴

Four hundred years before, They had chosen Sir Thomas More. He was a splendid champion too — splendid even in catastrophe. Add to their names all the heroes who ever crossed the buskined stage of History to challenge the dramatist with tragic flaws and the mysteries of personality. To their children all this is beside the point. They can not even understand the artist's problem. For they knew these men too, and knew them in a faith so single that their goodness was expressible in the naked simplicity of the act: it needed no explaining. Such a teller, William Roper has created.

The Reader who will thus adumbrate this Memoir will understand the truth that Roper is telling about Sir Thomas

More. And he will understand the essential truth about Saint Thomas, too.

NOTES ON THE ESSAY

1. The title-page of this edition is that given by Dr. Hitchcock. See Preface, p. ix.
2. Harpsfield's *Life* is far more comprehensive than Roper's. The first printed edition did not appear, however, until 1932.
3. Roper was by profession a lawyer. He was several times member of Parliament, and held other public offices. His political career was neither distinguished nor undignified.
4. See an anonymous play, *Sir Thomas More* (ed. Dyce), Shakespeare Society Publications, Vol. III. London 1844. The play was written about 1590.
5. Roper never mentions the *Utopia*, More's most celebrated library achievement.
6. See p. 13 of this edition. Subsequent references to Roper are to this edition, but the language of the passages quoted is not modernized. It is given literally as it appears in the Oxford text.
7. Holinshed, *Henry VIII*.
8. Roper, p. 46.
9. Roper, p. 82.
10. Roper, p. 13; 38.
11. So referred to in a correspondence concerning a proposed 'Life' of Bishop Fisher in 1576. Cf. Hitchcock, 'Introduction,' p. xl.
12. Roper, p. 37.
13. "Rastell's dedication of More's *English Works* to Queen Mary is dated 30 April, 1557. Harpsfield dedicated his *Life of More* to Roper as a New Year's gift, and in the course of his work (p. 100, lines 15-19) remarks, 'we trust shortlye to haue all his englishe workes . . . in print.' The New Year of 1557 is probable, though an earlier is, of course, not excluded. Roper's *Life*,

therefore, must have been used by Harpsfield before 1557." Hitchcock, 'Introduction,' p. xlv.

14. Roper, p. 81-82.
15. Roper, p. 70-71.
16. Browning, 'Ned Bratts.' *It* refers to *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
17. Roper, p. 52.
18. Roper, p. 21-23.
19. Chaucer, Prologue to the *Clerk's Tale*, 'Heigh style, as when that men to kinges write.'
20. Roper, p. 26.
21. Only two distortions of chronology are of any significance so far as the biography is concerned—significant because they imply a willful alteration of fact for artistic effect. (1) More was executed *five* days after his sentence, not *seven*, as he desired and Roper reports. Thus he did not suffer on St. Thomas' even, as the artist desires he should have done. See p. 83. (2) Sir Thomas Elyot's embassy to Charles V took place in 1531-2, some years before More's trial. Thus Elyot, as English Ambassador, at least, could not have been present in the Emperor's court when the news of More's execution arrived. But this in no wise precluded the Emperor's having expressed his admiration of More, nor of Elyot's mentioning it to the family. I question whether either deviation from fact is the result of a lapse of memory: art hath a privilege. They *ought* to have happened as Roper reports them.
22. Roper, p. 54.
23. In a letter to Ulrich von Hutten from Antwerp, 23 July, 1519. Translated from the Latin by P. S. Allen. *Op.cit.*, p. 5.
24. Ellis Heywood, *Il Moro*. (1556).
25. Roper, p. 63.
26. Roper, p. 48.
27. Routh, *op.cit.*, p. 141.
28. 'Neither a pearl nor a girl.' Cited by Erasmus in his letter to Hutten, *op.cit.*, p. 6.
29. *English Works*, p. 1184. See also Allen, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

30. Routh, *op.cit.*, p. 142.
31. Roper, p. 30-31.
32. Roper, p. 71.
33. 'Second Book of Comfort against Tribulation.' *English Works*, p. 1201.
34. *Ibid.* p. 1419.
35. Erasmus to Hutten, *op.cit.*, p. 2.
36. *The Historie of Kyng Rycharde the Thirde*. Ed. J. R. Lumby. Cambridge. 1883. p. 45 ff. More's authorship of this life is not beyond doubt. The probability is that this English version, which is incomplete, was adapted by More from an original in Latin by his old patron, Cardinal Morton. For a full discussion, see D. A. Stauffer, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-42.
37. Roper, p. 86.
38. Roper, p. 86.
39. Roper, p. 86; cf. also n. 21.
40. Erasmus to Hutten, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
41. Roper, p. 27.
42. Roper, p. 37.
43. Roper, p. 63-64.
44. Eleanor Wilson McAdoo. *The Saturday Evening Post*. 19 December, 1936. (Vol. ccix, no. 25.) p. 55.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text printed in this volume is the critical text constituted by Dr. Hitchcock for the Early English Text Society (see Preface, p. ix). The orthography and punctuation have been modernized; but where variant readings have been substituted, they have been bracketed. And are noted below, where the reading of the critical text is given also.

These alterations are neither numerous nor significant. Dr. Hitchcock selected as the basic manuscript upon which to construct her text, MS 6254 of the Harley collection in the British Museum. This she collated with twelve other manuscripts. In some instances, it has appeared to me that the readings of the Harleian manuscript—the basis of the critical text—are stylistically more consistent than the variants preferred by Dr. Hitchcock; and I have printed them. Thus of the thirteen departures of this version from the critical text, ten are merely restorations to readings given by the most reliable manuscript.

Page 16,1.23 [but] H²; omitted in O.

22,1.34 [them] S; omitted in O.

26,1.5 [he]. Emended; omitted in O.

28,1.22 [seas] H²; O. *sea*.

30,1.20 [latter] J; O. *later*.

31,1.25 [and] H²; O. *for*.

34,1.17 [thereof] H²; O. *of it*.

37,1.15 [the] H²; O. *this*.

47,1.9 *remember he was*, H²; O. [that] *he was*.

52,1.11 *He showed them*, H² *He showed* [vnto] them.

52,1.12 *might fall*, H²; O. *might* [after] *fall*.

58,1.13 *thinking I* H²; O. *thinking* [that] *I*


68,1.8 [to] H²; omitted in O.

[H²=MS. Harleian 6254; J=MS. Burns; S=MS. Sloane 1705 (B. Mus); O=The Critical Text (EETS).]

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